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MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

Photo] [*Emery Walker.*

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD, 1852.

From the painting by John Lucas in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD
CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHARLES BONER & JOHN RUSKIN

EDITED BY

ELIZABETH LEE

WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

I

The letters contained in this volume were written by Miss Mitford during the last ten years of her life (1845–55). The greater number are addressed to Charles Boner, the rest to John Ruskin, or to his father, John James Ruskin. The first letter (to Boner) is dated December 12, 1845, the last (to Ruskin) December 26, 1854. The letters to Boner[1] cover the whole of this period, while those to Ruskin and his father belong to the years 1852–4, and are printed here for the first time by the kind permission of Mrs. Arthur Severn.

Boner made Miss Mitford's acquaintance in August, 1845. He was living at Ratisbon, but while in England in 1845 he went to see Wordsworth at Rydal Mount, and at the poet's suggestion, on his way south, paid a

[1] These letters were printed in 1871, in the first volume of "Memoirs and Letters of Charles Boner," edited by Rosa Mackenzie Kettle.

visit to Miss Mitford at Three Mile Cross. He had long admired her writings, and for the remaining years of her life Boner carried on an unbroken correspondence with her. "Mr. Boner," she wrote to Mr. Bennoch, April 5, 1854, "is a most accomplished man. He came to me eight or nine years ago from Mr. Wordsworth, and we have been fast friends ever since."

Miss Mitford became personally acquainted with Ruskin in January, 1847. In a letter to Mrs. Partridge, dated January 27, 1847, she wrote: "Mr. Ruskin was here last week, and is certainly the most charming person that I have ever known. . . . He is just what if one had a son one should have dreamt of his turning out, in mind, manner, conversation, everything."[1] It is a pity that more of Miss Mitford's letters to Ruskin are not forthcoming.[2] But those printed here

[1] In this connection we may note that writing to his children June 28, 1883, from Brantwood, Charles Eliot Norton says: "He [*i.e.*, Ruskin] still remains one of the most interesting men in the world." Ruskin was then sixty-four years old.

[2] Only a very few are printed, and these are scattered through various volumes.

suffice to show the tone of the correspondence. In an interesting passage in a letter to Boner,[1] Miss Mitford herself distinguishes her methods in letter writing. She says in reference to the collection of her letters to form a sort of biography, that those she wrote for many years to Mrs. Browning were written in a far more complete abandonment than anything she could do in the way of autobiography, and that her letters to Haydon and to Ruskin were written with the same *laisser aller*, but "you,[2] to whom I have chiefly written as a sort of English correspondent, a letter of news to a friend abroad, can hardly perhaps judge of these frequent and habitual epistles where the pen plays any pranks it chooses." The difference between the two sorts of letters is well brought out in the specimens here given.

Charles Boner was born at Weston, near Bath, on April 29, 1815. As a boy his health was delicate, and his education therefore intermittent. From 1831 to 1837 he was tutor to the two elder sons of Constable,

[1] See pp. 298, 299. [2] *I.e.*, Charles Boner.

the painter, to whom Boner was also useful in other ways. He looked after Constable's private affairs, helped him in preparing and writing his lectures on landscape-painting, and wrote the letterpress to his book of engravings entitled "Constable's English Landscape." After his father's death in 1833, Boner paid several visits to Germany to study the language, staying chiefly at Frankfort-on-Main and Darmstadt. In 1839 he was appointed tutor to the children of Prince Thurn and Taxis at Ratisbon, a post he held for twenty years. He became an intrepid climber and chamois hunter, and in 1853 published his "Chamois Hunting in the Mountains of Bavaria," a book to which Miss Mitford constantly refers. He also translated from the German version many of Hans Andersen's tales. A volume of these, published in 1846, entitled "The Nightingale and Other Tales," he dedicated to Miss Mitford. A few sentences from the letter of dedication may be quoted: "You will not, I dare say, have forgotten the tales I read to you when sitting comfortably by your fireside

CHARLES BONER, 1853.

From his "Chamois Hunting in the Mountains of Bavaria."

To face p. 12.

some weeks ago.[1] As you were so delighted with the few you then heard, and expressed yourself so favourably of the translation, it gives me great pleasure to be able to present you now with the complete collection. I trust you will receive it kindly, and as a token that the pleasant fifteenth of October is well remembered by me."

Boner also wrote verses, to which reference is made in the letters, and he published a little volume of poems in 1858. It is not necessary to trace in detail the rest of his career, as we are only concerned here with his connection with Miss Mitford. He continued to live abroad, was special correspondent to the "Daily News" in Austria in the sixties, and died at Munich on April 7, 1870. Among his other works his "Transylvania" (1865) had some importance as a first-hand account of the country, and was translated into German in 1867.

[1] The dedication is dated November 10, 1845.

II

By 1845 Miss Mitford had done all the work that gives her a permanent place in English literature. Between that date and her death she issued two original works, "Recollections of a Literary Life" (1852), "Atherton and other Tales" (1854), and a collected edition of her Dramatic Works in two volumes (1854). To these undertakings the letters in this volume contain ample reference and they will be dealt with in their place.

No wholly satisfactory biography of Miss Mitford exists. To gain a fairly complete idea of her life and character it is necessary to read the seven published volumes of her letters[1] in addition to those printed in the following pages, the autobiographical passages scattered through the three volumes of her "Recollections of a Literary Life," as well as, among other books, Mrs.

[1] "The Life of Mary Russell Mitford," ed. L'Estrange, 3 vols., 1870; "Letters of Mary Russell Mitford," ed. Chorley, 2 vols., 1872; "The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford," ed. L'Estrange, 2 vols., 1882.

Browning's published letters,[1] and the life of William Harness.[2] The article on Miss Mitford in the "Dictionary of National Biography,"[3] by the present writer, forms a brief biography based on those materials with the exception of the letters of Mrs. Browning published since the little memoir appeared. Thus the definitive Life that shall combine all the available sources and give a carefully chosen and critical selection from Miss Mitford's letters, has yet to be written.

The main facts of Mary Russell Mitford's career are well known. She was born at Alresford, Hampshire, December 16, 1787. Her father was George Mitford, and her mother Mary, the only surviving child of Dr. Richard Russell, a wealthy clergyman. She brought her husband, who was ten years her junior, a dowry of £28,000, beside house

[1] "Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to R. H. Horne," 2 vols., 1877; "The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," ed. Kenyon, 2 vols., 1897; "The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett," 2 vols., 1899.

[2] "The Literary Life of the Rev. William Harness," by A. G. L'Estrange, 1871.

[3] Vol. xxxviii, 1894, pp. 84–6.

and landed property. She foolishly refused all settlements except £200 a year for pin-money. Mitford belonged to the younger branch of an old family; he received a medical education at Edinburgh, and then obtained a practice at Alresford in Hampshire. He was clever and handsome, young and gay, manly and generous, but lacked the homely quality of prudence. A zealous and uncompromising Whig, he first ruined his professional prospects by plunging into the fervent hatreds of a hotly contested county election, and had to leave Hampshire for Berkshire; then he offended a rich cousin who intended Mrs. Mitford to inherit his wealth, so that the money was left elsewhere; and finally quarrelled with the corporation of his new dwelling-place. Meanwhile he endeavoured to increase his resources by cards—he was a fine whist-player—and by speculation, with the result that in a very few years little remained but Mrs. Mitford's £200 a year. In these circumstances he, with his wife and little daughter, removed to Lyme Regis. Matters grew steadily

worse: almost destitute, they had to leave Lyme Regis, and travelled uncomfortably to London, where Mitford determined to refresh his medical studies by attending lectures at Guy's Hospital while considering where to fix himself next. In the intervals of those pursuits he used to walk about London with his little girl, and one of these walks, which was somewhat momentous, Miss Mitford herself describes:

One day (it was my birthday, and I was ten years old) he took me into a not very tempting-looking place, which was, as I speedily found, a lottery office. An Irish lottery was upon the point of being drawn, and he desired me to choose one out of several bits of printed paper (I did not then know their significance) that lay upon the counter:

"Choose which number you like best," said the dear papa, "and that shall be your birthday present."

I immediately selected one, and put it into his hand: 2,224.

"Ah," said my father, examining it, "you must choose again. I want to buy a whole ticket; and this is only a quarter. Choose again, my pet."

"No, dear papa, I like this one best."

"Here is the next number," interposed the lottery office keeper, "No. 2,223."

"Ay," said my father, "that will do just as well. Will it not, Mary? We'll take that."

"No!" returned I, obstinately; "that won't do. This is my birthday, you know, papa, and I am ten years old. Cast up my number, and you'll find that makes ten. The other is only nine."

My father, superstitious like all speculators, struck with my pertinacity, and with the reason I gave, which he liked none the less because the ground of preference was tolerably unreasonable, resisted the attempt of the office keeper to tempt me by different tickets, and we had nearly left the shop without a purchase, when the clerk, who had been examining different desks and drawers, said to his principal:

"I think, sir, the matter may be managed if the gentleman does not mind paying a few shillings more. That ticket, 2,224, only came yesterday, and we have still all the shares; one half, one quarter, one eighth, two sixteenths. It will be just the same if the young lady is set upon it."

The young lady was set upon it, and the shares were purchased.

The whole affair was a secret between us, and my father whenever he got me to himself talked over our future twenty thousand pounds—just like Alnaschar over his basket of eggs.

Meanwhile, time passed on, and one Sunday morning we were all preparing to go to church, when a face that I had forgotten but my father

had not, made its appearance. It was the clerk of the lottery office. An express had just arrived from Dublin, announcing that No. 2,224 had been drawn a prize of twenty thousand pounds, and he had hastened to communicate the good news." [1]

Mary was an only child. As the foregoing story shows, she was a spoiled and somewhat precocious little girl. It is said that she could read at three years old, and that her father used to stand her on the table and make her show off to visitors. On the strength of the lottery prize, Mitford built himself a fine house near Reading, where they lived until 1820. Mary was sent to a school in London kept by a French emigrant. She remained there for five years, developed her general taste for reading, and laid the foundation of her love for and knowledge of French literature. In 1802 she settled at home and began to read voraciously for herself, a habit she retained to the end of her life. We are told that in January, 1806, she read fifty-five volumes in thirty-one days. Her first published literary work was verse, and she issued volumes of "Poems" in 1810,

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," ii.

1811, 1812, and 1813. They were severely criticized in the "Quarterly," and, although they had some success in Great Britain, and a great success in America, are now forgotten.[1] She contributed poems to the "Poetical Register" from 1811 to 1814, when R. A. Davenport was editor. It was an intermittent periodical, but among the contributors were Scott, Moore, Edgeworth, and Horace and James Smith. Miss Mitford carried on a lively correspondence with Davenport between 1811 and 1814, and a few of the letters are preserved in the British Museum. In sending him some verses, October 28, 1814, she playfully describes her personal appearance at that time.

I could forgive their being trifles—but, alas! they are heavy trifles—lumpish, short, and thick and squab as their luckless writer herself. You never had the felicity of seeing me, so cannot taste all the beauty of this comparison, but as I trust two people so well disposed to like each other (there's vanity for you!) will not always be kept apart by those two formidable words Town and Country, you will see

[1] "Miscellaneous Poems," 1810; "Christina; or, the Maid of the South Seas," 1811; "Blanche of Castile," 1812; "Poems on the Female Character," 1813.

how much I resemble my productions. In the meantime guard yourself from expecting anything fair or tall or slender or blue-eyed or flaxen-haired or poetical; but set a red turnip-raddish, or a full-spread damask rose, or an overblown peony, or the full moon when it looks very bloody and portentous, or anything else that is red and round, by way of head, on a good-sized Norfolk turnip by way of body, and you will have as correct a picture of your poor little friend as heart can desire.[1]

By March, 1820, the family, through Mitford's extravagance and his love of play and of speculation, were reduced to the lowest poverty, and it was necessary for Mary to use her talents to keep the wolf from the door. They removed to the mean labourer's cottage at Three Mile Cross, "a series of closets, the largest of which may be about eight feet square," immortalized by Miss Mitford in "Our Village," and where she lived until 1851.

She began to write for the magazines, poetry, criticism, dramatic sketches. "I work as hard as a lawyer's clerk," she writes to Haydon in 1821. But, convinced that her

[1] The original letter is in the British Museum.

talent lay in tragedy, she composed several plays. "Julian," with Macready in the title *rôle*, was produced at Covent Garden, March 15, 1823, and acted eight times; "Foscari," with Charles Kemble as the hero, November 4, 1826, and acted fifteen times. "Rienzi," the best of her tragedies, was produced at Drury Lane, with Young as the hero, October 9, 1828, and acted thirty-four times. Its success roused Talfourd's jealousy, whose "Ion" was being performed at the time. Although these plays, like her verse, are now forgotten, they made their mark in their day, and "Rienzi" is a very fair example of poetical tragedy. But, luckily for posterity, the pressing necessity of earning money forced Miss Mitford, as she puts it herself, to turn "from the lofty steep of tragic poetry to the everyday path of village stories." The series of country sketches, drawn from her own experience, known as "Our Village," which originated a new style of graphic description,[1] and to which Miss Mitford owes her fame, first

[1] Cf. Harriet Martineau, "Autobiography," i, p. 418.

began to appear in the "Ladies' Magazine" in 1819; it was a somewhat obscure periodical, and its circulation speedily increased from 250 to 2,000. Miss Mitford became celebrated, but the incessant toil told on her health. Her mother died January 1, 1830, and the daughter's state of mind that year is well brought out in a letter to R. A. Davenport,[1] to whom she was evidently writing after a long interval of silence.

Miss Mitford to R. A. Davenport.

THREE MILE CROSS,
May 19, 1830.

. . . We have gone on badly enough—very poor—but finding some resource in my literary efforts, the over-estimation of which has been a blessed thing, inasmuch as it has enabled me to be of some service to my dear family. As far as regards celebrity the pleasure is worth less than it seems when viewed from a distance—and yet there is an illusion in dramatic reputation which, having enjoyed, one should miss. My health is failing fast under too great exertion—my father's, I am happy to say, remains perfect—my excellent mother we have lost last winter—an irreparable loss to me, who, if I should have the misfortune to

[1] The original is in the British Museum.

lose my dear father, would be alone and desolate in the world. For the rest, I have to be thankful for many inestimable friends, and for a general kindness and indulgence which would make me think well of human nature even if I were not disposed to do so on general grounds.

The father whose conduct caused Miss Mitford to labour so hard died in 1842. In spite of his faults and failings he must have possessed strong personal fascination, since neither wife nor daughter ever recognized his true character but loved and admired him to the end. Yet Miss Mitford had given up youth, health, and pleasure in getting money for her father to spend. "Her life," wrote Charles Boner to a friend in 1870, "was that of a slave," but she preserved "a cheerfulness amidst it all, her love for her father never allowing a suspicion of blame to rest on him." As a matter of fact she sacrificed health and happiness to the needs of an egotist whose selfishness blinded him to the sacrifice that was made for him; but as his daughter never found anything reprehensible in his conduct, her self-deception must have equalled his. During the

whole of her life she had a hard task to make ends meet. "Although want, actual want, has not come," she told Miss Barrett in 1842, "yet fear and anxiety have never been absent," and to the same correspondent, fourteen months before her death, when she was crippled with rheumatism, she wrote: "We must not forget, in thinking of my case, that for above thirty years I had perpetual anxieties to encounter—my parents to support and for a long time to nurse, and generally an amount of labour and of worry and of care of every sort such as has seldom fallen to the lot of woman." But we who are the inheritors of her labours can never forget that to this pressing need of earning money we owe "Our Village," which ranks among the great "Country Books" in English literature. It is strange to learn that Miss Mitford hated the act of composition and inwardly despised the literary craft; she infinitely preferred to cultivate her geraniums, and to give play to her social instincts, exercising her warm human sympathies in the interests of her friends

Indeed, Miss Mitford did her best to dissuade young people from taking up literature as a career. "It is not a healthy occupation," she declared. "I always detested it; and nothing but the not being able to earn the money wanted by my parents in other ways could have reconciled me to the perpetual labour, the feverish anxieties, the miserable notoriety of such a career."

After her father's death the long years of self-sacrifice and enforced toil were at an end. She had sufficient for her needs. A civil list pension of £100 a year had been granted her in 1837, and in 1842 a public subscription was raised to pay the debts her father had left; what was over added something to her narrow income. The last decade of her life was well filled with literary work, a large correspondence, and her beloved books. Her many friends cherished her cheerful society and admirable talk. Mrs. Browning said she preferred Miss Mitford's conversation to her books. She possessed that excellent thing in woman, a low, sweet voice, likened by her friend

Mr. Fields to "a beautiful chime of silver bells." In spite of her broken health she preserved her animation and vitality unimpaired. The two letters [1] written to Boner and Ruskin respectively a fortnight before her death are proof enough, and Mrs. Browning, writing to Ruskin about two months [2] after the event, says:

> I had a letter from her just before she went, written in so firm a hand and so vital a spirit, that I could feel little apprehension of never seeing her in the body again.

The letters to Boner mention all the events and interests of these later years. She tells him of the books she reads, of the publication of Macaulay's "History," Tennyson's "Princess," Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre" and "Shirley," Wordsworth's "Prelude," the first volumes of poems by Matthew Arnold and by A. H. Clough, Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," and O. W. Holmes's "Astræa," and names a number of books besides of less celebrity as well as many that are now wholly forgotten or relegated to the topmost

[1] See pp. 309–315. [2] March 17, 1855.

shelves of our libraries. She tells of the friends she sees, of visits paid her by Ruskin, Milman, Mr. Fields, Mr. Ticknor, Charles Kingsley, and others, and of the people encountered at friends' houses, among them Mr. and Mrs. Cobden and Bishop Wilberforce. Her health and her domestic affairs form important topics, and she gives much advice and counsel to Boner in regard to his literary aspirations and undertakings, and the regulating of his life in general.

Miss Mitford died on January 10, 1855, and was buried in Swallowfield churchyard.

In a letter to Ruskin (November 5, 1855) Mrs. Browning thus sums up Miss Mitford's character:

> It was a great, warm, outflowing heart, and the head was worthy of the heart. People have observed that she resembled Coleridge in her granite forehead—something, too, in the lower part of the face—however unlike Coleridge in mental characteristics, in his tendency to abstract speculation, or indeed his ideality. There might have been, as you suggest, a somewhat different development elsewhere than in Berkshire—not very different, though—souls don't grow out of the ground.

I agree quite with you that she was stronger and wider in her conversation and letters than in her books. Oh, I have said so a hundred times. The heat of human sympathy seemed to bring out her powerful vitality, rustling all over with laces and flowers. She seemed to think and speak stronger holding a hand—not that she required help or borrowed a word, but that the human magnetism acted on her nature, as it does upon men born to speak.

III

Miss Mitford's literary work has been so often and so well criticized that I do not propose to go over the ground again. But she has scarcely received due recognition as a letter writer. The ease of style, the beautiful, simple, flowing language, limpid and clear, the transparent sincerity, and in cases of intimates the ardent affection—for she wrote without any thought of publication—make Miss Mitford's letters delightful reading, and give them a high place among the familiar letters that are ranked as literature. Mrs. Browning considered that Miss Mitford herself was better and stronger than any of

her books, and that her letters and conversation showed more grasp of intellect and general power than was to be inferred from her finished compositions. R. H. Horne, another of her correspondents, held the same opinion, and when he told this to Miss Mitford, she replied: "Well, you see, my dear friend, we must take the world as we find it, and it does not do to say to everybody all that you would say to one here and there." Her sociable disposition, inherited from her parents, led her even to correspond on affectionate terms with many persons whom she had never seen.

One reason, perhaps, why full justice has never been done to Miss Mitford as a letter writer is the awkward, scattered way in which the letters available have been published.[1] Later research shows that some of these are wrongly dated. It would be rendering good service at once to English Literature and to Miss Mitford to make a selection of the most characteristic letters, following a chronological arrangement, and to place them together in a single volume.

[1] See p. 14.

Bulwer Lytton once said that the wear and tear of life did not leave the mind free for good correspondence, "letter writers should be idle men." There is much truth in the statement, for the best letter writers, like Horace Walpole, Cowper, Byron, Mme. de Sévigné, Edward Fitzgerald, were not conspicuously busy persons. The best letters are, of course, those that are spontaneous, and written only for the recipient with no thought of ultimate publication. But a distinction should be drawn between the letters in which the writers wholly, and often artlessly, reveal themselves because they need such an outlet for their inmost feelings—the letters, indeed, of the greatest letter writers—and letters which, as a means of intercourse between human beings at a distance, deal chiefly with outward circumstances.

Miss Mitford's letters take a middle place, and those printed here afford, as has been said, examples of letters of intimate affection and of letters of ordinary intercourse. In reading and judging letters some allowance, I think, should always be made for the

passing mood of the writer. When the letter is received, that mood may have ceased, and thus to every letter written and dispatched should be applied some of the reflections made by Charles Lamb in his essay on "Distant Correspondents." It often happens that by the time the letter is received, even if only a few hours after it was written, the sentiments expressed by the writer, the circumstances under which those sentiments arose, will have changed. If this is so, it may be argued, why write letters at all? But most persons are impelled at times "to lay open themselves" to a sympathetic soul, and it is one way by which character is revealed to posterity. Yet everything contained in a familiar letter should not be taken as representative of the permanent character of the writer; allowance should be made for passing querulousness, for temporary depression, for exaggerated enthusiasm born of the mood of the moment.

Miss Mitford herself, however, in a notable passage,[1] sets the importance of

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," iii.

letters as a revelation of character very high. She says:

Such is the reality and identity belonging to letters written at the moment and intended only for the eye of a favourite friend, that it is probable that any genuine series of epistles, were the writer ever so little distinguished, would, provided they were truthful and spontaneous, possess the invaluable quality of individuality which so often causes us to linger before an old portrait of which we know no more than that it is a Burgomaster by Rembrandt, or a Venetian Senator by Titian. The least skilful pen when flowing from the fullness of the heart, and untroubled by any misgivings of after-publication, shall often paint with as faithful and life-like a touch as either of those great masters.

Miss Mitford's earliest letters show a lightness and sprightliness some measure of which she lost later. In the letters [1] to R. A. Davenport, written between 1811 and 1814, there occur delightful passages, or sometimes a mere sentence, in the best style of letter writing. Here is a glance at the estimation in which women were held at that date:

[1] The originals are in the British Museum.

March 31, 1811.

To say nothing of the politeness of writing sense to a woman, which is at least giving her credit for the power of understanding it.

In reference to Miss Seward, Miss Mitford writes:

September 22, 1814.

Did she not owe some of her fame, think you, to writing printed books at a time when it was quite as much as most women could do to read them? Would her poems have excited so much attention had they been published by a John or a Thomas instead of an Anna Seward? Is she not judged rather by the original indulgence to her sex than by the present ungallant impartiality of criticism?

Davenport criticizes Miss Mitford's poem of "Blanche," and blames her for killing her heroine. She retorts:

I must, however, ask you what, if I had not sent her to Heaven, I could possibly have done with her on earth?

. . . . .

My tender mercy, which chose rather to kill Blanch of consumption than my readers of *ennui*.

And again, writing on a Sunday, she observes :

> See what it is to encourage a poor demoiselle de province who has nothing to do on a wet Sunday but say her prayers (and saying prayers can't last all day, you know), to write long letters and expect you to read them!

In 1810 Miss Mitford made the acquaintance of Sir William Elford,[1] a banker, politician, and dilettante painter. Her first letter to him is dated May 26, 1810, and the long series of letters continued until his death.[2] They offer a remarkable example of a correspondence between a young girl and an elderly man. It was Elford who introduced Miss Mitford to Haydon, with whom she also corresponded for many years.

The letters to Mrs. Browning, begun in 1836, ten years before her marriage, and continued until Miss Mitford's death,[3] offer

[1] 1749–1837.

[2] The last published letter is dated December, 1832, when Elford was nearing ninety.

[3] The last accessible letter from Miss Mitford to Mrs. Browning is dated August 28, 1854, and from Mrs. Browning to Miss Mitford, December 11, 1854.

an enduring example of friendship between two women of different ages—Miss Mitford was forty-nine and Miss Barrett thirty—and similar pursuits. The published letters of both testify to the esteem and affection of the friends.[1] Miss Mitford, indeed—Mrs. Browning was more reserved—took genuine delight in expressing her feelings. Here is a beautiful passage breathing her love for her "dear young friend," written in 1842:

> My love and my ambition for you often seem to be more like that of a mother for a son, or a father for a daughter (the two fondest natural emotions) than the common bonds of even a close friendship between two women of different ages and similar pursuits. I write and think of you, and of the poems that you will write, and of that strange brief rainbow crown called Fame, until the vision is before me as vividly as ever a mother's heart hailed the eloquence of a patriot son.

And a few weeks later, commenting on Miss Barrett's praise of her letters, Miss Mitford writes: "They come from my heart,

[1] Cf. "The Life of Mary Russell Mitford," ed. L'Estrange, 3 vols., 1870; "The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford," ed. L'Estrange, 1882, vol. ii, pp. 15–78 *passim*; "Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," ed. Kenyon, 2 vols., 1897.

and therefore go to yours: but that is all their merit—merit to us only—to the lover and the loved." The letters relate in Miss Mitford's bright, humorous manner all that was happening to herself and her friends, she comments on the books she reads and on their authors. Often she is despondent about her own affairs, and over the literary career in general. Commenting on the death of L. E. Landon, she observes: "Nothing seems to me so melancholy as the lives of authors." About the same time, in reference to Scott, she says: "All literary people die over-wrought—it is the destiny of the class"; and of Southey: "His fate is equally or even more deplorable." There is little doubt that Miss Mitford underrated the literary vocation, while Mrs. Browning was inclined to overrate it. But Mrs. Browning highly appreciated Miss Mitford's letters. Writing to Robert Browning, February 3, 1845, she tells him that Miss Mitford "has filled a large drawer in this room with delightful letters, heart-warm and soul-

warm, driftings of nature (if sunshine could drift like snow)."

There are many references in the letters to what may be called the amenities of letter writing. Miss Mitford does not consider herself a punctual correspondent —Mrs. Browning held a different opinion of her[1]—and declares that her friends should never feel annoyed if she does not immediately reply, because "I hold, as one of the most certain of all tenets, that no friends, and very few acquaintances, ever mean to affront or neglect one another; and that they who, to use the common word, are touchy on such points, do really commit as many mistakes and as much injustice as they take offences." On an occasion when she did send an answer without delay she apologizes for "this too rapid reply; but I wanted to lay in a stock of punctuality, upon which I might draw in case of future delays."

All the best letter writers have been great readers, and their assimilation of

[1] See p. 62.

what they read comes out clearly in the style and phraseology of their letters. It has been well said by way of comment on Byron's letters that he thought in Shakespeare. The effects of Miss Mitford's reading on her thought and style are revealed in every letter she wrote.

Her taste in literature, if not altogether scholarly, was certainly catholic. But in spite of her extremely varied and voluminous reading both in English and French literature, her critical judgment is not always sound. Mrs. Browning, in a letter to Ruskin (November 5, 1855), declares that Miss Mitford was "too intensely sympathetical not to err often. . . . If she loved a person, it was enough. . . . And yet when she read a book, provided it wasn't written by a friend, edited by a friend, lent by a friend, or associated with a friend, her judgment could be fine and discriminating."

Many errors of critical judgment are to be noticed in the letters in this volume. But it is only necessary to glance through

the pages of her "Recollections of a Literary Life" to realize that in spite of her derelictions she had both taste and judgment, and that in regard to the older authors, where no personal considerations could enter, she was almost invariably right.

Humanly speaking, however, perhaps the most valuable thing in Miss Mitford's letters is the enduring portrait they give of a type of woman who bids fair to become extinct in the future. Miss Mitford was undoubtedly a woman of letters by profession. Yet she never allowed the author to override the woman. Perhaps she underrated the literary craft, although she fully realized her own power and, as is natural, enjoyed her success. Yet, incessantly occupied as she was for the best years of her life in what we may call professional literary work, she found time enough to read for her own pleasure, to write long and frequent letters to her friends and acquaintances at a distance, to cultivate her flower garden and attend to the duties of her little household,

to take an interest in the lives of her immediate neighbours both rich and poor, and to entertain numerous distinguished visitors. All through the years she was content with narrow means, and had to deny herself many things, even in the closing period of her life, that the present generation regard not as luxuries but as necessaries. She preserved her calm, even temper, her cheerful spirit, her charm, her ready enthusiasm, to the very end, and the piece of her life shown in these letters well fulfils the poet's aspiration:

> Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
> Nor leave thee, when grey hairs are nigh,
> A melancholy slave;
> But an old age serene and bright,
> And lovely as a Lapland night,
> Shall lead thee to thy grave.

It is generally allowed that Miss Mitford owed her fine English style in a great degree to her familiarity with French writers. In her first letter to Boner she mentions Casimir Delavigne, Balzac, Victor Hugo, the Marquis de Custine, George Sand, and Eugène Sue, as authors with whose works she was well acquainted. She speaks also of the appearance of Carlyle's "Cromwell," Leslie's "Life of Constable," and of the plans for issuing a new daily paper—the *Daily News*—that shall represent the inevitable spread of democracy.

The following letters, until September, 1851, are all written from Three Mile Cross.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

Three Mile Cross,
December 12, 1845.

I cannot thank you half enough for your most kind and charming letter, and for your good-

MISS MITFORD'S COTTAGE AT THREE MILE CROSS.

To face p. 42.

natured recollection of my wish to possess those spirit-stirring national poems you speak of. I had just met with the "Parisienne"[1] in an earlier edition of Casimir Delavigne's Poems (rather odd that it should be found in a Brussels collection of 1831, and not in that of '34, is it not?), so tha now my desire is gratified. I find in an account of Béranger (a most delightful one, by the by) in the "Critiques et Portraits littéraires par Sainte-Beuve" that he has published five volumes of Chansons, and when I go to town I shall doubtless be able to pick them out of the contents of Rolandi's library, whose catalogue with its seven supplements would be a puzzle much harder than that of the Sphinx. Thank you, too, for telling me of "Les Petits Manèges d'une Femme vertueuse"—that will be by Balzac? "Les Paysans" I have seen, at least the first volume, and I don't choose to believe it a true representation, because I do not believe that the mass of a great nation can be so base and cunning; though I admit that the Marquis de Custine, in his very clever work, "Le Monde comme il est," gives pretty nearly the same account of the peasantry of Normandy. But Balzac must be a cockney Parisian (if such an idiom may be allowed). The boudoir or the opera are his proper scenes, and he has no love for the people, which

[1] A spirited marching song, the "Marseillaise" of 1830. Auber composed the music for it. Cf. Delavigne, "Messéniennes et Poésies diverses," Paris, 1835, p. 319.

is not only a great fault, but a great mistake in these days, when they are rising in importance every hour. George Sand and Eugène Sue are wiser, as well as the great Old Bard;[1] and they will have their reward not only in the diffusion of their reputation, but in its duration. Even Mrs. Gore, who may be looked on as a sort of weather-cock to show which way the wind of popularity blows, has just put forth a Christmas story, in which the scene is laid in a farm-house, and the squire's son marries a clerk's daughter.[2]

Before I forget, let me tell you that on consulting all the military authorities within reach (one of them a drill sergeant), I find them unanimous in deciding that the attitude in question corresponds to the word "Carry arms"—it is, in fact, the position of a sentinel on duty. With regard to the "Sandman," we have no such personage among our nursery bugbears,[3] and it would not be understood without an explanatory note, and even then would be a bit of foreign idiom unworthy of your truly English translation. The word that may be accounted synonymous amongst us as a

[1] Victor Hugo.

[2] Cf. "The Snow Storm. A Christmas Story." With illustrations by G. Cruikshank. 1845.

[3] Miss Mitford is in some confusion here, but she was very ignorant of Germany and the Germans. The *Sandmann* is equivalent to our *dustman*, one who scatters sand in the eyes of little children and makes them sleepy, in nursery language, ready for bed.

threat to naughty children is "Old Bogie." On this point I have inquired of nurses and governesses and children themselves (a Yorkshire dame and damsel from Cornwall were among the catechumens), and the universal response was "Old Bogie," though who the gentleman so designated may be is more than I can venture to guess. But I think you will be quite safe in putting his name in the front of your story. I look forward with great interest to the publication of that charming book, which I shall enjoy quite as much as if I were one of your legitimate readers of eight years old, instead of fifty-eight next Tuesday. Is the other translation the History of Rudolf of Hapsburg? or have I, with my customary infelicity, made a mistake in the Emperor's name? Do be so good as to tell it me, and don't be discouraged by the irksomeness of translation. You will find rendering poetry more a work of art, and therefore more self-rewarding.

I wish I had any news to send you, but I hear from town of little except the amateur play—(Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour")—in which Messrs. Dickens and Forster, of the "Examiner," and Mark Lemon and Douglas Jerrold, have been figuring.[1] They say that Mr. Forster's "Kitely"

[1] Produced at Miss Kelly's theatre, Dean Street, Soho, September 21, 1845. Charles Dickens played Captain Bobadil. Cf. J. Forster, "Life of Charles Dickens," 1873, ii, pp. 182 *et seq.*

was excellent; and one new paper,[1] ultra-whig, is coming forth with the name of Mr. Dickens, who is to write the "Feuilletons," and the combined aid of all the "Punch" people. It is thought a great risk.

The most important book has been Carlyle's "Cromwell,"[2] in which the mutual jargon of the biographer and his subject is very curious. Never was such English seen. The Lord Protector comes much nearer to speaking plain than his historian. I have been reading with great interest (thinking of you) Leslie's "Life of Constable,"[3] a charming book about an admirable man.

Miss Mitford's projected trip to Paris never came off. She gives Boner advice about a literary career, and incidentally complains of the speed with which books are produced in words that might have been written to-day.

March 23, 1846.

I wrote you a long letter some weeks ago, which I hope you have received by this time; and now I have to thank you very heartily for another of

[1] The first number of the "Daily News" was published January 21, 1846. Dickens was editor for January and February.

[2] Published 1845.

[3] Published 1845.

your pretty books. "The Fir Tree" and "Red Shoes"[1] seem to me exceedingly good, but unless these works be very profitable (which is an answer to everything), I had rather see you writing prose of your own, and laying the foundation of a solid reputation. I am quite sure there is in you the stuff of a true man of letters—a Southey, let us say—and having taken the first step under the protection of a celebrated name, I should rejoice to find the next advance made in your own name. However, if the Danish be more profitable, that is an answer to all. As it is, I had only last week a letter from a friend of Miss Edgeworth, to say that some little nephews and nieces (not Miss E.'s) had been so enchanted with your previous stories that they had been acting them in their house in Dublin: this is worth a thousand empty praises from grown people.

You will be sorry to hear that I, generally so active, am quite crippled by rheumatism, and hobble about like a woman of ninety. I have some hope that it is the result of this most unusual season, and that when the real spring comes (for as yet we have only the name) and brings with it the primroses and the violets, I may be able to get out and look for them. At present (this 23rd of March) we are all winter-locked together.

[1] Translations from Hans Andersen.

February–March, 1846.

I thank you heartily for your very interesting letter, and shall look forward with no common expectation to a translation carefully made by one so very competent. In these days, when translating, composition, all sorts of book-work seem done as if by steam, it is something choice and rare to find poet and publisher agreeing to recognize the virtue of slowness. Well, the trees of long growth are those of long life; the gourd of the night withers before sunset, so it will be seen with these pen-and-ink plants, be sure.

I yesterday received from Miss Barrett a very interesting letter sent to her by Miss Martineau. She will get into her cottage before April, and gives a charming account of her terrace, her field, and her quarry, whence she got the stones for her terrace wall, and which she means to hang with ivies and honeysuckles, and tuft with foxgloves and ferns. She gives also a charming account of the great Poet,[1] although he has just lost his only brother, and had bad news from his sick daughter-in-law.

I had had an excellent account of him a few days ago from our mutual friend, Henry Crabb Robinson (also the bosom friend of Goethe), who had been spending a month at Ambleside, to be near him. He says that his great resource is whist—the great resource of age. Somebody

[1] Wordsworth.

comes to see him and brings two packs of cards, which last till the same somebody comes again the following year. Mr. Robinson said that Miss Martineau was much in favour, not only with Mr. Wordsworth, but with his female coterie, Mrs. Fletcher, Miss Fenwick, Mrs. Arnold, and Mrs. Wordsworth, quite a flower-garden of ladies such as Richardson used to cultivate. If I were there I should want *men* (at fifty-eight one may say so, and you will know what I mean: an infusion of manly intellect and manly spirit is indispensable in a country life). Henry Chorley passed two days with me last week: he says that Mr. Reeve is in Paris. His little girl runs about *his* house (I mean Henry Chorley's) like a pet kitten, and is, he says, a most sweet little creature. I hope that Mr. Chorley's play will be brought out at Covent Garden by Miss Cushman, who is now, to my great horror, playing Romeo to her sister's Juliet. I don't like she-Romeos, but she has made what is called a hit, though hardly, I should think, of the best sort. How can a woman make the right sensation in doublet and hose!

Is not Hood a great serious poet? Are not the "Bridge of Sighs" and the "Haunted House" magnificent? Henry Russell has been setting and singing the "Song of the Shirt," and being a great tragic actor (in spite of the music), it is a very fine thing. I agree heartily with you about Mr. Procter's songs. They come next to Burns's, I

think, and far before Moore's. You will be glad to hear that he has just got a commissionership, and is released from the drudgery of conveyancing. His wife (Basil Montague's wife's daughter) is a very pleasant person.

I am going to Paris in May. Can you help me to any letters of introduction ; not to grand people, of course, but to such as you would like to see yourself? The man whom I should best like to know is, I am afraid, not seeable—Béranger. Think of this, dear friend. A very clever and very excellent young man is to escort me, and probably a young lady, and, being artistic, he would like to know any actor or musician. I think to spend six weeks there. Miss Barrett and Mr. Kenyon say that I shall not go, which, if I wanted a motive to keep my resolution, would of course supply one. Miss Barrett is so much better that she sits up in an arm-chair, and walks across the room, although she does not leave it. Can you help her and me to any titles of French novels? Any of Balzac's or Charles de Bernard's?

June 6, 1846.

The enclosed will prove that I had not forgotten to answer your previous kind letter. It was written to be taken by a friend who did not call for it, and then lay unseen in my desk till your two welcome notes came to recall it to mind. I now write in great haste, while a friend waits to transmit it to

you, and have only time to say how very fine I think "The Nightingale"—quite original;[1] Wordsworth might have written it thirty years ago. Be sure that I shall be honoured to have my name in your preface.

You will wonder to see my name on the title-page of a French book.[2] Mr. Rolandi came to me to select from the two hundred volumes of Alexandre Dumas one volume of five hundred pages fit for ladies and families, and young people, our first customer being the Head Master of Eton, who takes one hundred copies. It has been a great trouble, and as we print at Brussels, I fear all sorts of blunders from my not seeing the proof-sheets. Pray come and see me if you visit England,[3] and forgive this hasty scrawl.

Haydon, the historical painter, committed suicide by shooting himself in his studio, June 20, 1846. He had been greatly depressed by his failure as a candidate to paint a fresco in the new Houses of Parliament, and by the further disappointment of his patrons' lack of appreciation of his pictures of the "Banishment of Aristides,"

[1] A poem by Boner.

[2] "Fragment des œuvres d'A. Dumas choisis a l'usage de la jeunesse," par Miss M. R. Mitford, 1846.

[3] Boner did not go to England until the next year, 1847.

and "Nero playing on the Lyre while Rome is burning." He had been an intimate friend of both Miss Mitford and Miss Barrett, and his death and the manner of it was a great shock to them. Miss Mitford had corresponded with Haydon fairly regularly from 1817 to 1831, and then again from 1841 to the time of his death.

July, 1846.

How can I ever thank you half enough for the two charming volumes which I have just received, and for the surprise, the honour, and the gratification of the prefatory address? The books are, in every sense of the word, beautiful; the illustrations worthy of the stories, and the translation best of all. The one only word that I have found to change in the next edition is "grey" as applied to the Nightingale—lowly brown is the right colour, though no doubt Mr. Andersen said "grey." Don't you remember that Thomson, always so accurate, talks of her russet robe? That story of "The Nightingale,"[1] which contains so fine an allegory, and "The Wild Swans,"[1] seem to me the most charming of the book. Is that your own opinion? Once more accept my truest thanks.

Poor, poor Haydon! He was my old and

[1] Stories by Hans Andersen, translated by Boner.

intimate friend and correspondent for above thirty-five years. At one time he used to write to me three or four times a week, and although my occupations, and my business, and my dislike of letter writing had much diminished that closeness of intercourse, yet the friendship continued unbroken. This event quite upset me, and I have hardly recovered it yet. I shall transcribe for you a letter on the subject from Miss Barrett, which I think you will like to see. She says:

"The shock of Mr. Haydon's death overcame me for several days. Our correspondence had ceased a full year and a half, but in the last week he wrote several notes to me, and by his desire I have under my care boxes and pictures of his which he brought himself to the door. Never did I anticipate this! Never did I imagine it was other than one of the passing embarrassments so unhappily frequent with him! Once before he had asked me to give shelter to things belonging to him, which, when the storm had blown over, he took back again. I did not suppose that in this storm he was to sink. Poor, noble soul! And be sure that the pecuniary embarrassment was not what sunk him. It was a mind still more lost. It was the despair of the ambition by which he lived, and without which he could not live. In the self-assertion which he had struggled to hold up through life, he went down into death. He could not bear any longer the neglect, the disdain, the blur cast on

him by the age, so he perished. The Cartoon disappointment, the grotesque antagonism of Tom Thumb, to which he recurred most bitterly in one of his last notes to me—these things were too much for him. The dwarf slew the giant. His love of reputation, you know, was a disease with him, and for my part I believe that he died of it. That is my belief. In the last week he sent me his portrait of you among the other things ; when he proposed sending it he desired me to keep it for his sake ; but when it came, a note also came to say that he could not make up his mind to part with it —he would lend it to me for a while. A proof with the rest that the act was not premeditated— a moment of madness, or a few moments of madness —who knows!"

So far our great poetess. I, knowing how doatingly fond he was of his wife and children, believe that he calculated on the sympathy that would follow the event, and that in the infinite whirl of thought preceding such a deed the notion of sacrificing himself to their interest mingled. Mrs. Haydon, from whom I heard yesterday, imputes it wholly to the conduct of a friend on whom he had relied during the last twenty years. She does not name him. However that may be, the effect will be a most comfortable provision for his wife and family. She has a pension of £50 a year from the Queen, and one of £25 from Lady Peel. £400 was subscribed the first day at Mr. Serjeant

Talfourd's (to whom, as to Elizabeth Barrett, I introduced him). The Royal Academy have given £50, the Duke of Sutherland £200, and doubtless other wealthy persons will come forward. People will remember now that he was once the most promising painter in England (when my good old friend Sir William Elford gave £700 for the "Judgment of Solomon"), and that if he did not quite keep that promise, he yet gave a great impulse to art; and that the three Landseers, Eastlake, Cope, Maclise, and Lance were his pupils; that he first made casts of the Elgin marbles with his own hands, and that his Lectures on Art are only second to Sir Joshua's. He has left twenty-six volumes of memoirs, and wishes them printed. Doubtless, judging from his letters and conversation, they are full of piquancy and cleverness, for he lived with all the eminent men of letters of his day, and was a close and shrewd observer and a fresh and bold writer and talker. Indeed, so full was he of life and animation, and youth of mind, that I never could join Death and Haydon in my thoughts, and that his decease, setting aside the frightful manner of it, shocked me as a discrepancy, like the death of a young bride.

Poor Haydon's wife was a most beautiful woman, just like the Rebecca of "Ivanhoe," a Jewess born. Mr. Hymen, who appeared at the inquest, was her son by her first marriage, and one of the

best scholars that the Reading School ever sent forth. Poor Haydon left three children, two boys, one in the navy, and one to whom Sir Robert Peel has given an appointment, and a very pleasing and pretty girl, his daughter. Sir Robert's conduct all through has been most noble—so it was when poor Mrs. Hemans died. He sent her, in her last illness, £100 from his own purse, and an appointment for her favourite son.

Your verses are full of truth and beauty. I shall send a copy to Mrs. Haydon and to Miss Barrett. I do not apologize for this long account of a man so interesting: the subject possesses me *terribly*—I cannot get rid of it; indeed, it seems to have made a deep impression everywhere. Mr. Home has written on it—the best thing he ever did write—which appeared in the "Daily News," but I like your stanzas better. By the way, the "Daily News," since the price is reduced to twopence-halfpenny, has a circulation of 23,000, beating the "Times." Advertisements will of course follow this great circulation, and will then make it a most profitable concern. I have not been to France this year, nor even to London, except to see dear Elizabeth Barrett, for a reason which I will tell you when we meet. She is better and better; she walks to the bookseller's at the corner of the street, and drives to Hampstead and Highgate. My Dumas book is not out yet. Two other volumes of Madame D'Arblay's Memoirs are coming out,

arranged by Henry Chorley. The most striking book for years is the "Life of John Foster,"[1] the great essayist, a most noble person.

August 13, 1846.

I have but a moment, dearest Mr. Boner, in which to request your acceptance of the small edition of "Belford Regis,"[2] which has just been issued. Your verses gave great pleasure to dear Mrs. Haydon, to whom I sent a copy.

September, 1846.

Some of my friends are just going to Frankfort, and I trouble them with this letter to ask if you have received a packet from me sent about a fortnight ago and containing a new edition of "Belford Regis," the least bad I think of my prose writings. Has Balzac published anything since his "Les petits Manèges d'une Femme vertueuse," and the first volume of "Les Paysans"; and what is Eugène Sue about?

I had last night a visit from Mr. Pitman,[3] of Bath,

[1] A Baptist minister (b. 1770, d. 1843) and contributor to the "Eclectic Review." Cf. "Life and Correspondence of John Foster," ed. J. E. Ryland, 2 vols., 1846.

[2] The first edition of Miss Mitford's novel "Belford Regis, or Sketches of a Country Town" (*i.e.*, Reading), was published in 1835. Mrs. Browning considered it her best work, but it lacks the charm and spontaneity of "Our Village."

[3] Sir Isaac Pitman (1813–97), inventor of a new system of shorthand, conducted a private school at Bath, 1839–43,

a young enthusiast, who has invented a new system of shorthand; and, above all, a new alphabet for printed words, with, of course, a new system of orthography conformable to the sound of words. He says that children learn by this new method in an incredibly short time, and means to try the system in some of the metropolitan ragged schools. In the meanwhile he has ten thousand converts and pupils, prints a journal in his new way, and is in the course of printing the Bible and the "Paradise Lost" (I wonder how many people read "Paradise Lost" now-a-days in *any* printing). Among his disciples are James Montgomery, Dr. Raffles, Simpson of Edinburgh, Mr. Bright (Cobden's friend), and Rowland Hill, of the penny postage; the three last, practical men.

I have sent him to-day to see a friend of mine, the Hon. Mrs. Fitzgerald, who a few years ago published a volume of specimens of a primeval language—the whole language, indeed, in which I remember she forgot the little words "yes" and "no"!!! Ask your friend, Count Pocci,[1] if he remembers a certain Mrs. Farmer, the mother of Madame Klenze, of Munich. She and her younger

and established there a Phonetic Institute, and conducted a "Phonetic Journal," to further his methods.

[1] Graf Franz Pocci (1807–76) was a distinguished black-and-white artist and illustrated a large number of books. He was on the staff of the "Fliegende Blätter," the German "Punch," and was also an author and musical composer of merit. Cf. "Deutsche Allgemeine Biographie," xxvi, pp. 331–8.

children live in a nice house about a mile off, built by my father, where I passed the best years of my life, and which I am glad to find in the hands of so kind a friend and so excellent a woman. Her daughter, Mary, showed me the other day a play-bill of an opera designed by Count Pocci, in which he figured as actor, poet, and composer, with a portrait of himself at the top as an alchymist. I was quite glad to see this, for I had felt so much admiration for his charming designs, that I wished to hear as much of him as I could. They speak of him with enthusiasm.

The next letter contains the news of Elizabeth Barrett's marriage to Robert Browning. The friendship between Miss Mitford and Mrs. Browning extended over an unbroken period of twenty years, and offers, among other things, an enduring example of the fallibility of most dicta concerning the supposed incapacity of women for friendship. The first meeting between the two took place on May 27, 1836, when Miss Mitford was forty-nine years of age and Miss Barrett thirty. Miss Mitford was staying at Serjeant Talfourd's in London, and describes the meeting in a letter to her father.

"I told you that Mr. Kenyon was to take me to the giraffes and the diorama, with both of which I was delighted. A sweet young woman whom we called for in Gloucester Place went with us—a Miss Barrett—who reads Greek as I do French, has published some translations from Æschylus, and some most striking poems. She is a delightful young creature; shy, timid, and modest. Nothing but her desire to see me got her out at all . . . she says it is like a dream that she should be talking to me, whose works she knows by heart." [1] Miss Mitford, indeed, considered Miss Barrett to be one of the most interesting persons she had ever seen; it must not be forgotten that Miss Mitford, for thirty years before she met Miss Barrett, had been accustomed to see frequently the most interesting men and women of her time.

As Miss Mitford lived in the country and Miss Barrett in London, and after her

[1] It is interesting to note, in connection with future events, that in mentioning the guests at dinner at Serjeant Talfourd's on May 26th Miss Mitford includes "a Mr Browning, a young poet (author of 'Paracelsus')."

marriage in Italy, paying only rare visits to England, the two friends did not often meet face to face, although, as the letters show, Miss Mitford made a practice of going to town to spend a day with her friend as often as she could. They were thus dependent on letters as a means of communication. Unfortunately Miss Mitford's available letters to Miss Barrett are scanty for the period with which we are dealing (1845–55), but references to them are numerous in letters written to other friends by both Miss Mitford and Miss Barrett.

Miss Barrett kept her marriage a secret from Miss Mitford, as from the rest of her friends. As soon as the great news might be told, Mrs. Browning informed Miss Mitford, who wrote a letter which was received at Orleans while the Brownings were on their way from Paris to Italy. Mrs. Browning replied immediately: "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for saying that you would have gone to church with me. Yes, I know that you

would. And for that very reason I forbore involving you in such a responsibility, and drawing you into such a net."

In conclusion, she asked Miss Mitford to continue to write to her, and notwithstanding the distance between England and Italy—communication was less easy and less swift than it is now—notwithstanding the new ties and the rare meetings, the correspondence was carried on until Miss Mitford's death in 1855 with such absolute regularity that if a letter failed to reach Florence at the usual hour its non-arrival threw the Brownings into a state of anxiety: "Your letters come so regularly to the hour, you see, that when it strikes without them, we ask why."

October, 1846.

I have to thank you for your most kind letter, and for your verses, which are full of power; and now you must summon all your indulgence and all your faith in the sincerity of my esteem and my goodwill, and allow me to entreat you to find some better literary agent than my poor self. I live in the country, going rarely, if ever, to London, and

then to one house only. I have as few literary friends and acquaintances as is well possible, and of the race of Editors and Journalists I know absolutely nothing. Then if I write to proprietors of magazines, or newspapers, or periodicals of any sort, requesting them to insert a friend's poem, the reply is sure to be that they overflow with poetry, but that they want a prose story from me, and most likely they trump up a story of some previous application, and *dun* with as much authority as if I really owed them the article, and they had paid for it. Now all this is not only supremely disagreeable to me, but makes me a most ineffective and useless mediator for you.

You should have a man upon the spot for those things, and not an old woman at a distance, hating the trade of authorship, and keeping as much aloof as possible from all its *tracasseries*. You will understand from this, my good friend, that if I were to write a story for a book of yours, I should have half a dozen people claiming some imaginary promise, and clamouring, as if I had robbed them in giving away a worthless tale. As to the "Times," I am, it is true, intimate with the proprietors, but it happens that Bear Wood is the only house in England where that universal paper is never mentioned, or, if mentioned, only to be denied. So, my dear friend, you must establish, when you come to England again, some correspondence with one

or other of the thousand and one literary people in London—which I am sure you can do most easily.

The great news of the season is the marriage of my beloved friend, Elizabeth Barrett, to Robert Browning.[1] Do you know him? I have seen him once only, many years ago. He is, I hear, from all quarters, a man of immense attainment and great conversational power. As a poet, I think him overrated. The few things of his which are clear, seem to me as weak as water; and those on which his reputation rests, "Paracelsus," and "Bells and Pomegranates," are to me as so many riddles. I dread exceedingly for her the dreadful trial of the journey across France to Italy, and the total change in life and habits. Mrs. Jameson and her niece joined them at Paris, but my last letter was from Moulins,[2] and she then seemed much exhausted. God grant she be not quite worn out by the terrible journey to Pisa! The prettiest account of a love-match for a long while is to be found in the sixth volume of "Madame D'Arblay's Memoirs," excellently arranged by my friend Henry Chorley. It is charming to see the account of their cottage life—she working for him in England, he for her in France. I have

[1] The marriage took place in London, September 12, 1846. See also p. 66.

[2] October 2, 1846. See "The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," ed. Kenyon, 1897, vol. i, p. 297.

also been much amused by the "Coq du Clocher," by the author who calls himself Jérôme Paturot.[1] Do you know anything about him? He is immensely clever, and very entertaining.

Tell me anything about French literature—I know little of German, and, to say the truth, take small interest in it, though Count Pocci interests me much from his universality of talent.

[1] The pseudonym of Marie Roch Louis Reybaud (1799–1879), political economist and statesman, author of clever satirical social novels that had an immense success.

February, 1847.

I sit down with *malice prepense* to pay in quantity though not in quality your most amiable letter; prompted thereto not merely by my strong desire to chat with a friend whom I very greatly value and admire, but by my anxiety to hear that he is quite recovered. We have had a most trying winter. I never have lost so many old friends. Indeed, the aged and the infirm have almost universally dropped from the tree.

I at Miss Barrett's wedding![1] Ah, dearest Mr. Boner, it was a runaway match: never was I so much astonished. He prevailed on her to meet him at church, with only the two necessary witnesses. They went by railway to Southampton, crossed to Havre, up the Seine to Rouen, to Paris by railway. There they stayed a week. Happening to meet with Mrs. Jameson, she joined them in their journey to Pisa; and accordingly they travelled by diligence, by railway, by Rhone boat — anyhow — to Marseilles, thence took shipping to Leghorn, and then settled themselves at Pisa for six months. She says that she is very happy. God grant it con-

[1] See p. 61.

tinue! I felt just exactly as if I had heard that Dr. Chambers had given her over when I got the letter announcing her marriage, and found that she was about to cross to France. I never had an idea of her reaching Pisa alive. She took her own maid and her Flush.[1]

I saw Mr. Browning once. Many of his friends and mine, William Harness, John Kenyon, and Henry Chorley, speak very highly of him. I suppose he is an accomplished man, and if he makes his angelic wife happy, I shall of course learn to like him.

Thank you very much for your information as to French books. The last that I read of Balzac's was "Une Instruction criminelle," which finishes the tragical history of poor Lucien de Rubempré, begun in "Les Illusions perdues," and continued with admirable power in "Un grand Homme de Province à Paris." He is a wonderful writer. Yes, I know the works of both the Comtes de Maistre, the great Catholic writer, and his brother who wrote the "Voyage autour de ma Chambre." It is very graceful. But the writer of that day that I like best is Paul Louis Courier, and I think that since writing to you I have read all Beaumarchais. I mean the four volumes of "Mémoires," which are really as clever as "Figaro," and which I earnestly recommend to you. They are pamphlets published on

[1] The little dog Miss Mitford had given her. [2] See note, p. 60.

occasion of different lawsuits, which kept all Paris in a roar. He was certainly one of the most remarkable men in the world. "Picciola" is very pretty—just that. We have no books of much account here. Two new vols., the sixth and seventh of Madame D'Arblay's "Memoirs," Heneage Jesse's "Memoirs of the Pretenders," Edward Jesse's "Book of Dogs," and Smith's "Streets of London," are about the best of them.

Mr. Walter's ("Times") health is failing, and the paper will have to combat the success of the "Daily News," which Mr. Dilke ("Athenæum") is bringing out at half price. The "Times" has also changed its editor, Mr. Delane having left it, and (I believe) young John Walter taken to the post. These are great secrets, but I believe I am right.

This, I think, is the principal news. Everybody speaks well of your pretty books, and I trust that your publisher has cause to be of the same opinion. I shall be delighted to see the new volume. My neighbours, the Farmers, are going to Germany, so that they will see Count Pocci, of whom they speak so well. They are excellent people, but I do not see much of them, as sometimes, you know, happens. Do you know Mr. Ruskin, the Oxford graduate, whose letters on art are so striking? He is a most charming person, and I thought of you often when he was here last week.[1] You would suit each other.

[1] Miss Mitford's first meeting with Ruskin took place in January, 1847.

Thank you a thousand times for all your goodness to me, especially for forgiving my being so bad a correspondent. I shall mend. An old relative of my father's—the only relation with whom I do correspond, and, indeed, almost my only relation as cousinship counts in the South, writes to me and I to her about three times in two years, each loving the other very heartily; so I suppose it runs in the blood. At all events, I do very sincerely admire and regard you, and I trust we shall meet this year at my poor house.

June, 1847.

Thank you a thousand and a thousand times for all your kindness, especially this fresh one of the list of French books. The Memoirs, Biographies, and Portraits are particularly welcome, French Memoirs being my favourite reading. For I assure you and Madame de Bonstetten that I have read long ago, something between sixty and eighty works of that sort of the old times, from the "Mémoires de Sully" downward; and, only this year, read over again those of the Cardinal de Retz and of Mademoiselle de Montpensier. Tell her this, or she will think me a fanatic for "le genre romantique."

Have you yourself or has she read the lyrics of Victor Hugo? "Les Feuilles d'Automne," "Les Chants de Crépuscule," "Les Orientales," and "Les Rayons et Ombres." These and Béranger's

"Chansons" and the best of Charles de Bernard, of George Sand, and Balzac seem to me the finest things, together with some of Lamennais, Edgar Quinet, Michelet, Thiers, and Thierry of the new school. But Paul Courier is perhaps greater than all, and I suppose Madame de Bonstetten will admire and like them all.

I have got the whole of Gerald Griffin's [1] poetry, and swear by him at present, as well as by most of his prose. Did you or did you not like Mr. Bennett? [2] He went back with me from Whiteknights and stayed talking till half-past twelve, both forgetting how late it was. I wished for you, when you would have seen a fine mind thrown open, and shown him one quite as fine, adorned with the grace of manner which he wants. But I always wish for you when there is anything worth enjoying, and that, dear friend, is the measure of my opinion of you, as well as of my regard and affection. Some day or other I do hope we shall see more of each other—Shall we not? This very evening my neighbours from Bear Wood are coming and Mr. Willmott, a most accomplished and admirable

[1] An Irish dramatist, novelist, and poet (1803–40).

[2] William Cox Bennett (1820–95) was a miscellaneous writer, and author of poems on children. Miss Mitford wrote to Mrs. Hoare in 1852: "My friend, Mr. Bennett, besides being a very pleasing poet, is an eminent jeweller-watchmaker." He was a younger brother of Sir John Bennett, sheriff of London, who died in 1897. Cp. "Recollections of a Literary Life," iii, p. 94.

clergyman, author of a fine life of Jeremy Taylor, and of the Lives of the Sacred Poets ; one in whose charming conversation, and sweetness and purity of nature, one forgets the talent—so much is character above mere intellect.

I wrote to Mr. Langford, the manager at Blackwood's London house, about you the very day after you went away. He is not professedly at all connected with the magazine, but is a literary man and so clever that his good word would tell. Do call on him in Paternoster Row. You are sure to like each other.

I had a letter to-day from a sister of Charles Buller's about your books. She calls you Andersen's *only* translator. What you say of him is charming. I am so glad he has fallen into your hands. Have you seen my friend Mrs. Archer Clive's poem, "The Queen's Ball"?[1] The subject is very striking—one hundred and fifty persons had been invited who are dead. I suppose they copied the last year's list.

In the next letter Miss Mitford makes the

[1] Under the initial "V." Mrs. Clive published verses (1840) and a novel, "Paul Ferroll" (1855). She was a friend of Florence Nightingale. She was born in 1801, and accidentally burnt to death in 1873. "Happy sister, happy mother, happy wife, she even bears the burdens of a large fortune and a great house without the slightest diminution of the delightful animal spirits which always seem to me to be of her many gifts the choicest," Miss Mitford wrote of her in "Recollections of a Literary Life," ii.

first reference to the ill-health which was to pursue her to the end of her life.

Wordsworth's daughter Dora (Mrs. Quillinan) died at Rydal in July, 1847, and in spite of Miss Mitford's assertion, her father mourned his "immeasurable loss" during the remainder of his life.

July 2, 1847.

I don't think that you ever got a very long, very affectionate and very true letter, which a most charming one of yours prompted and which I sent by the post from Reading to Ratisbon.

You can hear of Mrs. Haydon at Mr. Serjeant Talfourd's. I have not heard from her for a long time; it being of course my sin, as you would well imagine.

I need not tell you how glad I shall be to see you, but you will be sorry to find me exceedingly lame—lame ever since my rheumatism four months ago. I now take three hours for walking the distance that I used to accomplish in one; and this hot weather renders exercise so fatiguing to me, that it is a misery to me to get about until the very last thing at night. If I had money to keep a little pony chaise, it would of course much lessen the inconvenience, but that is not likely to happen, for I have not sufficient and am never likely to have more. As it is, this affliction prevents my visiting London

this season as I had intended; my recovery depending, I am told, on the effect of warm weather and abstaining from fatigue.

Mrs. Wordsworth will feel her daughter's death more than her husband. Miss Martineau was with him when the death of his brother was announced; he cried at first, but within two hours was quite in his usual spirits.

Boner was in England in the summer of 1847, and often spent a day with Miss Mitford. In a letter to Mrs. Partridge, dated July 26th, Miss Mitford wrote: "Mr. Boner, my favourite friend, and Andersen's best translator, has been in England and much here. He sent me the other day for dear Patty Lovejoy's album (she is a sweet little girl of eleven years old) an autograph of Spohr's, and one of Andersen's, and the latter is so pretty. . . . He (Andersen) is the lion of London this year—dukes, princes, and ministers are all disputing for an hour of his company; and Mr. Boner says that he is perfectly unspoilt, as simple as a child, and with as much poetry in his every-day doings as in his prose."

August 9, 1847.

I do not know when I have been more heartily provoked by anything than by our old enemy, the Great Western, which did not bring your most kind packet of autographs till you were fairly on your way to the Continent, so that my sincere and earnest thanks have to follow you all the way to Ratisbon. Most heartily do I thank you, and so do those who are almost as much obliged as myself; for, after all, you have done most for me, as you intended, by enabling me to give so much pleasure to those who are so kind to me.

I was delighted to find Andersen writing such excellent English; among other reasons because he will, I think, be capable of estimating the vast difference between his translator and his translatress, if one may so speak of the Danish-English doer-into of the German version of the books, for such, it is said, Mrs. Howitt is.[1] I wrote the other day to Miss Skerrett ("the Queen's Miss Skerrett," who has so much to do in recommending books all through the Palace; and who, herself a great Danish scholar, would be a good judge of the beauty of your versions), begging if the Danish stories were not in the royal nursery that she would place them there, which she says she will do. She tells me

[1] Cf. "The Improvisatore," 2 vols., 1845, and "Only a Fiddler and Other Tales," 3 vols., 1845, both translated by Mrs. Howitt.

that, in addition to her multifarious occupations, she has been much tormented this year by the necessity of officiating as interpreter between a German maid and a French maid, belonging to the Queen, neither of whom knows a word of any language but her own. As Miss Skerrett is not going into Scotland with Her Majesty, the poor foreigners must get on how they can. She tells me that she saw Mrs. Trollope this spring, and thought her much aged; grown thin, and changed in no common degree. Mrs. Trollope was going to Venice, to be there at the same time with some learned people—some association or other.

Before I forget it, let me tell you that the name of the heroine of Wordsworth's fine classical poem is Laodamia. I think it was with you that I was speaking of that poem. Alfred Tennyson's new poem is a Commonwealth of *Women*—a man gains admission, and you can imagine the result![1] It is said to be good. William Harness told me that he met one day, at dinner, the Heroine of Locksley Hall and her husband, and he thought the lady had chosen wisely.

Poor Mr. Walter died without a sigh. His son is in for Nottingham;[2] Fox and George Thomson in —Bulwer, Hobhouse, and Roebuck out. I am sorry for Roebuck.

By the way, the new M.P. for Oxford (city) is my

[1] "The Princess," published 1847.

[2] He was M.P. for Nottingham, 1847–59.

friend William Wood,[1] a great whig lawyer, and a man of splendid talent and admirable character, son of Sir Mathew, and known to all the ministers, so that there is a Solicitor-General found. Mr. Harness and Mr. Dyce have been spending a day here, and my literary news comes from them. Moore, although so entirely failing in intellect that he repeats the same question a dozen times, yet wrote the other day to offer twelve volumes of anecdotes and diary. They will of course be very interesting.[2]

I wrote the other day to Mrs. Browning's sister to ask her address, lamenting the long time that had intervened without my hearing from her, and she wrote me word that she had just had a similar letter from her, so a letter has been lost one way or the other.

In the following letters Miss Mitford gossips about her health, her visitors, and the books she is reading, both French and English, and the news her friends tell her in their letters.

October 11, 1847.

Never doubt for an instant the vivid sympathy

[1] William Page Wood (1801–81), Baron Hatherley, was appointed Solicitor-General in 1851 and Lord Chancellor in 1868.

[2] Edited in 8 vols. by Lord John Russell, and published 1853–6.

with which your feelings and occupations never fail to inspire me. I remember, myself, the strong admiration with which I read Dr. Arnold's Life and Letters, and that best and greatest of his works, the "Lectures on History." One of his correspondents (the Rev. Mr. Blackstone) is a friend and neighbour of mine, and you shall see him (D.V.) the first time I have the happiness of receiving you here. He has the living of Heckfield, succeeding immediately to Mrs. Trollope's father, and inhabiting the pretty grounds and vicarage-house where the celebrated authoress was *raised*. He is also a clever man, but too bigoted a Churchman for my taste, and I always wondered how Dr. Arnold and he got on together: he is, besides, a grandson of the Judge. The last that I heard of poor Dr. Arnold's family was from a dear friend (John Kenyon) who was visiting Mr. Wordsworth, and he said that he met Mrs. Arnold and her children crossing a field by a country pathway in their deep mourning, and that it impressed him like a village funeral. I don't know whether this expression strikes you, but to me it seemed at once a poem and a picture.

Did you read the "Life and Letters of John Foster," the essayist and dissenting minister?[1] I think that they struck me even more than the "Memoirs of Dr. Arnold," as belonging to a man, equally pious, but even more strikingly a thinker

[1] See note, p. 57.

and of independence of character and conduct, and individuality the most marked and decided of any man of our day. He not only followed and courted no one, but he suffered nobody to court or follow him, and the contrast of his rigid economy, and his love of books and prints, his scornful resistance to editors and employers, and his delightful humility to his friend and rival, Robert Hall, above all those charming letters to his obscure old widowed landladies, seemed to me more worthy of admiration than anything I have met with for a very long time. Both books have the great merit of biography, that of causing you quite to forget the biographer, and I think you would admit that the two men are worthy compeers both in character and in genius.

I should also like you to read the "Life and Letters of Gerald Griffin," equally interesting in a different way. The story resembles that of Crabbe (you know, of course, the charming Life of the poet by his son), with much higher independence of character. You shall read it when we meet, for I have got it, as well as his poems, two very choice volumes, and as "The Collegians" is also announced for the Parlour Library, I hope also to have that. He was a most remarkable writer, dying at thirty-six, a monk in an Irish monastery.

Lamartine's book[1] is very striking indeed: all the people at the Palace, Lady Lyttelton, the subgoverness, Miss Skerrett, the Queen herself, who

[1] "Histoire des Girondins," 1847.

reads so little, have been devouring it. Her Majesty had also written to Miss Skerrett from Scotland desiring her to procure Andersen's Memoirs in German. I have sent your translations, with the Irish poems and Motherwell, to the Palace this very week; so that I am sure yours will be the first English translation of Andersen that Her Majesty and the governesses will see, and I have no doubt but it will be followed by the purchase of the volumes. I wrote —— all about you if the Queen should be curious.

Lamartine is very striking and very interesting, and I did not think that it was in him to write so great a book. He does injustice, crying injustice, to Napoleon, and is so much too candid towards most of the Revolutionary leaders, that reading of so many crimes and so many excuses for all parties, one is tempted to ask, who is to blame? Nevertheless it is a very great book.

I am now reading Appert's [1] "Dix ans à la Cour de Louis Philippe," and am much amused by it. How was he ruined? and what was he about in Prussia? Tell me what you know of him, for one cannot help being interested for him, and one likes him for his way of talking of Napoleon, and Béranger, and Casimir Delavigne, and Arnault.[2]

[1] Benjamin Appert (1797–1847) became secretary to Queen Marie Amélie, consort of Louis Philippe, after the revolution of 1830. He travelled in Europe to study prison discipline.

[2] Antoine Vincent Arnault (1766–1834), a French dramatist,

What a shame to let him (Arnault) die in poverty and misery! I have no faith in courts or princes, and doubt if one branch of the Bourbons be much better than the other.

Did you read, in Jerrold's Magazine, Mrs. Acton Tindal's beautiful ballads?[1] She is a dear friend of mine, and last week brought her husband to see me. They spent four days at the "Bear" in Reading, travelling from Aylesbury with their own horses, so that they were backward and forward here every day. I never saw a handsomer or a happier couple —both elegant, gracious and full of gaiety and sensibility; he is a fine athletic dark man of thirty-one or thirty-two, she a most sweet and lovely blonde of twenty-three or twenty-four. She had £25,000 down, and will have much more, and he is only clerk of the peace for Buckinghamshire and partner to his father, a very rich solicitor of Aylesbury, so she might have done much better in a worldly point of view. But he is very well connected (nephew of the late Chief Justice) and of the highest character; altogether I have never seen two people so happy and so deserving of happiness. I think she will attain a great popularity. Her poems have force and finish of no common order, resembling the best and most picturesque of Mrs. Hemans's, without imitation, and with youth and healthiness.

and author of some graceful fables. He played some part in the political events of his time.

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," ii.

I should like to make you acquainted, and some day or other I hope to do so. Her poems are chiefly ballads on very graphic and interesting historical subjects, and there is a vein of devotional poetry, very fine because very true. Mr. D'Israeli was staying at their house for his election. His clinging to his own people is curious. His old constituents at Shrewsbury desired him to send down a candidate, and he did send the master of an old curiosity shop, a rich Jew broker, whom they have elected, together with my friend, Mr. ——. My maid says that fifteen years ago, when standing for High Wycombe, he had one hundred Jew boys from London to carry his flags.

I am so lame still that I am compelled to get a pony chaise. God grant it do not send me to the Queen's Bench! Next year you shall drive me about in it, will you? Is not this a long letter? Now you must write me one still longer, and send me a very plain, proper direction, and tell me what French books to read. Is Eugène Sue writing anything since "Martin"? or Balzac, or George Sand? or Victor Hugo? or Charles de Bernard? I read a clever imitation of "Gerfaut," lately, "Le Chien d'Alcibiade." Mrs. Browning says there are no new French books to be had at Florence. They are to winter at Rome.

They have made me an honorary member of the Whittington Club,[1] in company with Joanna Baillie,

[1] A club instituted at the "Crown and Anchor," Arundel

Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Somerville, and Leigh Hunt—only these five. This is a very great compliment.

December 16, 1847.

I write to you on my birthday, the day that seems to gather one nearer to those whom one loves and values; and I send you all the good wishes that I know you would pour forth on your poor old friend on this her sixtieth birthday, if you did but know it. I hope and trust that you are better in Germany than we are in England. Influenza is in every house quite as a pestilence; illness of every sort besides. For my own part I have been suffering all the autumn. But besides this, I have had a great affliction in the death of my dear old dog. You remember him, I am sure, with his bright auburn curls, dark and shining as the rind of the horse-chestnut, and the golden light that played over them in the sunbeams! I am sure you remember my poor pretty favourite. But nothing but my long experience of his high qualities can convey a notion of his real value; his sweetness, his gentleness, his affection, his over-estimate of kindness, his forgetfulness of

Street, Strand, in 1846, under the auspices of Douglas Jerrold and other men of letters, to combine social and intellectual advantages at a subscription low enough to allow men and women of the middle class to join. It came to an end in 1873, and was then revived as the Temple Club, which is now also extinct.

wrong, his recollection of old friends, old servants, were most remarkable.

At the end of three years he suddenly recognized a friend of mine who had been good to him. I cannot tell you how I miss him, and his sagacity was such as to make him really a companion ; his sagacity and sympathy—for that, I suppose, was the real charm after all—the loving where I loved. If you remember, he recognized you last year. The only alleviation to our loss is that he died without pain and without any of the infirmities of age, which if he had lived much longer he would, I fear, have suffered, for he was thirteen or fourteen years old.

I have been thinking of you and talking of you lately, having been engaged (as indeed I still am) in making out a list of secular books for lending libraries for the poor. The young wife of a clergyman, a girl of sense, wrote to me to say she could find no such list except of tracts and sermons ! so dear Mr. Lovejoy and I have fallen to work, and when we have completed our labour we shall send you a copy. We mean to set down the very best books (which are luckily the cheapest), upon the plan of Napoleon, who, you remember, in throwing open the theatres of Paris after a victory or a marriage, always chose a play of Corneille, or of Molière, and always found his choice justified by the gratification and intelligence of the audience.

Just as we were thinking of this subject William Chambers, of Edinburgh, came to pay me a visit, and has assisted us by a good deal of information and advice, such as getting parishes to agree and interchange their libraries. He says that the obstacles to all education in England and Scotland are the clergy. I am quite of that mind from my own experience, but I did not expect to hear him say so. He is a very superior person. He has persuaded Miss Edgeworth to write a book for young people—remarkable, considering her age, for she must be turned of eighty, but still one that justifies my theory of not writing too long, inasmuch as it reads just like an imitation of her own better works. It is called "Orlandino," and is a story of a lad reformed from drinking by a younger lad.

Alfred Tennyson's poem, "The Princess, A Medley," is at last announced to be published in a few days: I am very anxious to see it. Thank you for your list, dear friend. I mean your French list. I am now reading M. de Barante's great book on the Dukes of Burgundy. Very captivating historians are these modern French writers, full of picture and colour, interesting you in the story of the country they write about, but whether (I am especially thinking of Lamartine now) they may give a very correct idea of the people is doubtful. Lamartine has a wonderful tendency to make his people better, so that one wonders (the

crimes having certainly been committed) who, according to him, was to blame.

Is Eugène Sue writing now? I have seen nothing of his since "Martin," and one cannot afford to lose the creator of Rigolette. Your books are still at Windsor Castle; Miss Skerrett—herself an excellent Danish as well as German scholar—praises the translation greatly. Messrs. Grant and Griffith have just sent me your new volume of "Andersen." Thank you for it.

1848

The group of letters for 1848 are of much interest. Miss Mitford writes of the bad state of her health, which, besides more or less chronic rheumatism, was now further harmed by an attack of influenza—which is no modern scourge—and the effects of a carriage accident. She shows her interest in French politics, and, like Mrs. Browning, declares herself a great admirer of Louis Napoleon. In the summer she spent a fortnight at Taplow, by way of change of air, and her description of the scenery and its associations recalls some of the most delightful passages of "Our Village." She reads a large number of old books and all the important new books, among them "Jane Eyre," and many are the speculations as to its authorship, Macaulay's "History," and a variety of French works. Miss Mitford was only acquainted with German

literature through translations, but, even so, it is strange that she should never have appreciated it. She excepts Schiller and Goethe, but finds all the rest "poor, bald, coarse, without life or character or power"; even Auerbach, who is really the originator of the so-called "kailyard" school of writers, she contemns, and quotes a criticism she has heard and with which she is in full agreement, that German authors have been made sufficiently known in England to demolish their reputation. It is a curious prejudice, and one that still prevails in many quarters.

February 28, 1848.

I hope that you have before now got a long letter which I wrote and kept in the house, waiting myself to go into Reading, and at last sent off rather suddenly. At all events I am sure you would not doubt the reality of my friendship and affection. I am no very punctual correspondent, but I am a very constant person in my attachments, and you cannot get quit of my regard for you if you were to try. For the rest, I did not answer your last note until now, because I had nothing to say that would have given you pleasure. This has been the most unhealthy

winter that I ever remember—wet, damp, showery, vapoury, thoroughly trying. Accordingly I have paid the common penalty, and been miserably ill of the sort of low fever which has been called influenza. I am now recovering, but it weakens people bodily and affects the spirits, strength, and appetite more than can be imagined. However, so many old friends have died that I suppose I am fortunate to have weathered the storm.

Last week arrived the pretty volume called "Charles Boner's Book." Thank you much for it. I like best the "Toe and Finger" story. But I want to suggest to you for next year what I am sure you would do well and what would I think please. You live among children abroad—write a journal (true or false as you like, when the writer is a real artist the false is the true) of the sayings and doings of children abroad, putting as little or as much of story as you like. You will see that this will have much that is new and piquant, will admit of almost any poem or tale that you may wish to introduce, whether of your own or of Andersen's, avoiding any collision with other translators, and preserving a sort of oneness which books of detached pieces want. Think of this. I foresee that the Andersen and Fairy Tale fashion will not last ; none of these things away from general nature do. There is, after all, a sameness and a poverty in all that does not belong to our common kind which never really sustains itself. Two or three of

Andersen's stories, such as "The Ugly Duckling" (in spite of its hideous title), will last for ever, like Undine, but as a class they will soon go down, sooner in our country than anywhere else.

Forgive this frank expression of opinion, dearest friend. I would not take such a liberty except in writing to one whom I esteem so much. Try what you can do with scenery and character and manners as you see them. Descriptions, for instance, of an artist's studio at Munich—the thousand things to which intelligent children would be taken in Germany—would afford better material for a child's book than all the fairy tales that were ever devised. I had a talk over the matter with Mr. Griffith, who agreed with me that Andersen would certainly not last as a child's classic. He mixes a satire which is neither within their comprehension nor desirable if it were. Try to deal with real scenery and human affections. At all events think of this.

Are you coming to London this year? Let me know as soon as you know yourself, because I should like to go to a French play with you. I have an old friend coming to lodge in the village for a month who has spent the last twenty years in France with her husband, she having been goose enough to marry a Frenchman much younger than herself. They are now parted after years of misery and a great sacrifice of income. I had thought of going to her, to Paris and Fontainebleau, this next autumn and winter, but what will come of this

revolution God knows. One is lucky not to be there now. You have been having the same sort of affair in a smaller way. Tell me anything you know of the Parisian doings.

Lamartine's has been a curious career. Who after watching his rise as a sort of sacred poet (I always detected the mixture of cant and finery in his verses), and then as a sort of Exeter Hall speaker, would have expected him to come forth either with a revolutionary book (for an apology for the heroes of the Revolution it is) or as a revolutionary hero? Do you know much of Louis Blanc? I hope some of them are sincere, but really one doubts.

I have not heard from Mrs. Browning for three or four months.

We have a very clever novel called "Jane Eyre," by a new writer. He calls himself Currer Bell, but one does not know whether that be his real name.

After all, Lamartine is a remarkable man; to write so well and to speak so well is something rare.

April, 1848.

Ten thousand thanks for your kind and interesting letter. I still think that a well-executed, natural, cheerful children's journal in Germany would sell, or a set of stories on German History, like the "Tales of a Grandfather," and the same

thing from French History (if not done before), would be charming. Think of these things and attend to the idiom. A great admirer of yours, a very pretty young friend of mine, showed me the other day that you had two or three times called a bird, clearly the mother of the family, *he*. Do you think in English? That looks as if you did not. If ever people get to read thoughtful poetry I think that yours will do you honour, but I doubt if ever they will. You may rely upon it that very few people read Wordsworth, although it is the fashion to praise him.

The last thing I read of Andersen's was his "Autobiography," and between the vanity of the writer, and the baldness and poverty of the translation, I was completely disgusted. I did not think it possible to so entirely do away with the interest of the rise of a poor boy into intellectual eminence. But he has no sympathy with his own order—he is essentially a toad-eater, a hanger-on in great houses, like the led captains of former days, a man who values his acquaintances for their rank and their riches and their importance in the world; not one who, like you, fills with honour and independence the most honourable and useful part in a great family, but one who uses fame merely as a key to open drawing-room doors, a ladder to climb to high places. Of all living writers the one most free from this fault is Béranger, and at his feet one could cast oneself in admiration. But I doubt Andersen, and

in a different way (for the sin and weakness of ambition) I doubt Lamartine. I have been hearing a great deal of him lately from an English lady who has lived twenty years in France and is just returned here. She was intimate with his wife, and speaks of him as a man of very distinguished appearance, but cold and almost repulsive manners. He carries out his fancies so far as to have two servants who had been condemned to death. If for political offences that is well, but I should hardly sympathize with murderers for butlers and footmen—would you? She, my neighbour, was also intimate with Arago[1] and Cavaignac,[2] and M. ——, editor of the "National," used to act with her in plays of her own writing, when professor of history at a provincial school. Truly this is the age of the Press!

Mind and let me know if you do come to England. The weather here is abominable. We have not had two fine days for the last two months, which prevents my gaining strength.

I think of you often and always with the most affectionate interest.

May 9, 1848.

I begin answering your affectionate and charming

[1] François Jean Dominique Arago (1786–1853) astronomer and physicist, played a prominent part in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848.

[2] Louis Eugène Cavaignac (1802–57), was Minister of War in 1848 and quelled the June insurrection. He contested the Presidency of the Republic with Louis Napoleon, and never acknowledged the Empire.

letter the moment I receive it. I wish you were here to drive me again where I spent yesterday—to the woods of Silchester; weather such as you describe, villages smiling, with gardens and orchards in flower, horse-chestnuts standing out with great wild cherry-trees from the beech and oak woods; and under one's feet wood-sorrel, wood-anemone, wild hyacinth, Solomon's seal, and lily of the valley.

Nevertheless, so nervous and poorly am I still, that the good done me by the air, and the loveliness of the scenery, was almost counterbalanced by the shying of the pony as I came home, although I was driven by a steady old coachman; but you would have been a companion and a friend, as well as a good driver, and we should have talked of too many things to have allowed me time to be frightened. I don't know if I have written to you since I had that providential escape from a vicious pony, who kicked two carriages to pieces the same afternoon; in the first of which I was saved only by the courage of my brave and faithful little maid: so that the fear is not quite unnatural, when combined with great physical weakness, for I am still very poorly. However, we must hope.

Everything in nature here is most lovely; I never saw so much blossom, or heard so many nightingales, and I have longed for you to listen by my side to two in our own garden, which answer

one another all night long. Now let me tell you that I am hopeful the papers are mistaken about Mr. Wordsworth. I have asked of many persons who ought to know, but they all say they know nothing, but I had the other day a letter from Keswick, from his and my friend John Ruskin, who mentions him incidentally, without a hint as to the "mental imbecility" that has gone the round of the Press. He says "Even Wordsworth does not understand Switzerland." I am sure Mr. Wordsworth might retort and say—"John Ruskin does not understand Cumberland Lakes, for he calls them vile bits of woodland and pools of dirty water"; but then the charming Oxford graduate is in a passion. These revolutions have stopped his travels, and put him out of sorts. Tell your charming princess how flattering is the interest she feels in me, and how earnest and sincere are my good wishes for her health and happiness.

Tell me of your sister. I envy any one who has born friends. I was always an only child, and always longed for a brother, and now I have only a few distant relatives—most of them too grand to claim. One whom I saw the other day, after thirty years' absence (a niece of the late Duke of Athole, and my second cousin), seemed a pleasant, frank, open-countenanced person, and probably poorer than myself. Yet I felt all the time I was talking to my fair visitor, how very little we had in common, and how wise had been the rule which

had withheld me from making or even meeting the advances of far greater people—the Bedfords, Greys, etc., to whom I am very remotely, but still lineally, allied, and who have the reputation of great kindness. Perhaps this is more truly pride than poor dear Andersen's, but it is at all events much safer.

Does not France seem in a more hopeful condition? I think so. The people have behaved so well. There has been little bloodshed and no irreverence. God grant the end may be for the peaceful happiness of all nations! Here there is so strong a manifestation in favour of an enlarged franchise, that it must, I think, take place. The "Times" says so, and you know they generally know which way the wind sets. I myself should like an educational test, but it will probably end in household suffrage and the ballot.

In Ireland the sufferings are terrible. The worst cases are wisely kept out of the papers, but a most enlightened friend of mine just returned thence, says that they have been driven into such a strait by famine, as men in a boat at sea; that parents have been found over a pot where their own child was the food, and that a relation of his own, an assistant barrister, tried two boys for putting their younger sisters in a bog-hole, to seize themselves on the little portion of meal doled out to them!! Fancy such facts as these in a Christian land! Nobody seems to see a remedy. The real one

would be for all great proprietors, whig, tory, or radical, to lay aside politics, to live upon their estates, cultivate the waste lands, and educate these poor misguided people into faith in their fellows.

Yes, your critic is a pretty little girl, and a very clever one; full of prejudice as an egg is full of meat, but racy, original, and ambitious. She is at present working hard at the classics, and very angry with me for meeting her raptures about Cicero with bits of "Les Mystères de Rome," which I happen to be reading. I have no love for the Romans; the Greeks, if you will, were a great people.

We have two very beautiful books—"The Female Poets" by Mrs. Frederick Rowton,[1] a most charming volume. The most large and generous criticism, and the best selection that I have ever seen. It is superbly got up too, and will be a standard work. The other is Forster's (of the "Examiner") "Life of Goldsmith,"[2] which, if it were not one-third too long, would be charming. What is curious is, that over and over again the biographer praises his hero for the absence of superfluous phrases. Then we have a very striking volume, "The Autobiography of a Working Man"

[1] Miss Mitford is in error here. The compiler is Frederic Rowton, and his book is entitled "The Female Poets of Great Britain."

[2] "Life and Times of Goldsmith," by John Forster, 1848.

(Alexander Somerville,[1] the soldier who was flogged), as graphic as Defoe, and a very safe and sound politician. Also I have read (at your recommendation) George Sand's "François le Champi." It is charming. She is at present the fashionable foreign writer in England. . . . It is so good in such a one as you to care for an old woman like me.

I meant to have gone to London this spring, but I have not strength for the journey. You would hardly believe how feeble I am become, and how soon tired by exercise and conversation.

When Mrs. Browning heard of Miss Mitford's continued ill-health she advised her to try a change of air: "Turn your dear face toward the seaside; somewhere where you can have warm sea-bathing and sea air." Miss Mitford took as much of this advice as her doctor thought right and went for a fortnight to Taplow. She gives a charming description of her little holiday, in which she explored that corner of Bucks with its many literary associations, in the chapter entitled "Authors Associated with Places,"

[1] Alexander Somerville (1811–85) was the son of a Lothian carpenter and wrote on Corn Law Reform and other economic subjects. He collected facts for Cobden.

in her "Recollections of a Literary Life."[1] In the letter to Boner she treats the same subject in a more familiar tone.

August 25, 1848.

I do not know when any letter has given me so much pain and so much pleasure as the one I have just received from you. The pain, because you have been so ill, the pleasure from a thousand causes—gladness that you are recovering, delight in your kindness—and pride, an aunt-like, almost mother-like pride, in yourself. I am quite without near relatives, and make my dearest and choicest friends serve instead as resting-places to my affections; and you and the sister whom you love so well must pardon me for claiming you amongst those whom my judgment and my affection combine to place very, very near the head of the list. Thank you for all that you tell me of that dear sister. I have long remarked that amongst the most ripening and improving of womanly tendernesses is that of an elder sister, especially when the object to be cared for is a brother, and all that you tell me of Miss Boner is so admirable, and falls in so well with the theory founded on previous observations, that I seem to know her almost as well as I know you. If it please God to spare me a few years, I hope that I shall know her personally, for surely when you return to England she will not

[1] Cf. vol. i.

remain abroad, and then I do hope she will come with you to my poor cottage. If she do not, I shall ask you to take me to see her. Tell her this, and tell her I am determined to win a little bit of her heart if only by our mutual appreciation of you. *That* must be my claim to her regard.

Thank you for your most kind enquiries after my health. It continues bad. About a month ago I betook myself to Taplow, close to Maidenhead, from which lovely spot I am just returned. Do you know it? I had the pleasantest lodging possible, in a cottage close to the Thames. My rooms opened into a garden full of trees and flowers, which stretched down to the river. We had even our own little terrace, and landing-place, and stairs to the river. Just below us the fine old bridge, and above the magnificent woods of Cliefden. There cannot be a prettier spot. The Thames was all alive with gay pleasure-boats, barges, and graceful processions of swans with their young cygnets. A friend from London, a young man of great talent and still greater kindness, came to meet me there. He lodged at an inn in the town, and came every day at one or two o'clock to drive me to different places.

We went to Dropmore, the beautiful gardens created by Lord Granville; to Ockwells, a most curious and beautiful house of Henry the Sixth's day; to Lady Place, in the vaults of which the Whig lords concerted the Revolution of 1688—I

went into the recess where the famous letter to the Prince of Orange was written and signed; to Cliefden—"Cliefden's proud alcove"—where, although the house is new, the terrace remains just as it was when the Countess of Shrewsbury held her lover's horse while he fought and slew her husband:—to Beaconsfield, to trace all that the fire had spared of Burke's house: the foundation, the well, some outer walls, the stables, and the grove in which he was accustomed to walk.

N.B.—I affronted the people at Beaconsfield by not going on pilgrimage to Waller's house (I saw his monument in the churchyard when I went to the church to see Burke's), but I worship no false gods, and we know that if he were alive now he would not get into a magazine; and he lived in the great age of lyric poetry, the age of Ben Jonson, of Beaumont and of Fletcher, of Wither, of Crashaw, of Herrick, of Lovelace, of Montrose, of Suckling, of Milton, of Dryden.

Then I visited the stalwart yeoman, who at eight months old served as the model of Sir Joshua's "Infant Hercules." He is as fine and Herculean an Englishman now as ever one beheld. I cannot help telling you that there, in that old-fashioned Buckinghamshire farm-house, I found a print of my own cottage. To Chalfont St. Giles, where the house to which Milton retired from the plague remains almost, I should think, as the great poet left it. To Stoke Poges and Upton Church to

visit the haunts and home and grave of Gray—two parties were there on the same errand—I mean at Stoke—one copying the unrivalled epitaph written by him, the other sketching the quaint old church. Twice to Windsor, once for the castle and chapel, which I had often seen, once to Herne's Oak, a ghost of a tree, which I had never seen before; and three times to Burnham Beeches, for their own matchless beauty. They fully deserve their reputation. Fancy six hundred acres of ground finely diversified by dells and declivities, now consisting of the finest turf, now clothed with splendid fern, holly, and juniper bushes, and over all scattered those gigantic pollards, mostly hollow, but crowned with such masses of verdure, that nothing but seeing them could make one believe that such mere shells could support such luxuriant vegetation; and then their size, and the masses in which their roots wreathe themselves above the turf to the distance of many yards. They are marvellous.

The Grotes have a country house close by, a small, unostentatious house, that does honour to the simple habits and refined taste of that elegant scholar and excellent man. Mrs. Grote erected a monument to Mendelssohn, a tombstone—a headstone—in the middle of a place worn bare by picnickers, whither, as appears from some stanzas of her inditing, the great composer accompanied her. The verses are not bad, but the whole has the oddest effect possible. Besides doing all this, I

used to go every evening into the Taplow woods by the river, or sometimes on the river, and enjoyed all this beauty very much.

But I can hardly say that I am much better for the journey. Moreover, my dear faithful little maid caught cold on our return, and is at this moment very ill with sore throat, and I am in a great anxiety about her. Well, I will not pester you any longer with my troubles.

John Ruskin, the Oxford graduate, is a very elegant and distinguished-looking young man, tall, fair, and slender—too slender, for there is a consumptive look, and I fear a consumptive tendency—the only cause of grief that he has ever given to his parents. He must be, I suppose, twenty-six or twenty-seven, but he looks much younger, and has a gentle playfulness—a sort of pretty waywardness, that is quite charming.

He took a fancy to my writings as you did, and came to see me by the introduction of our dear friend Mrs. Cockburn (the Mary Duff of Lord Byron), and now we write to each other, and I hope love each other as you and I do. He passed a fortnight at Keswick, but did not see Wordsworth, although Wordsworth and he had often met in London. The family did not seem to wish it, he said, and in short both he and I feared there must have been some truth in reports about the decline of intellect of the Bard of Rydal Mount.

Nevertheless, Mr. Serjeant Talfourd has just dedicated to him his "Final Memorials of Charles Lamb." Two volumes of letters, containing such as could not, for the tragedy they tell, be published until the death of Miss Lamb, and others which, for a contrary reason—their comedy—were necessarily suppressed until poor simple George Dyer was safe under ground. Nothing can be better than Lamb's share of these volumes. I can't say so much for the Serjeant's. Bulwer has published a novel ("Harold, the Last Saxon King"), very dull as a tale, but good as history, doing justice *to* Harold and *on* William. By the way, William Smith,[1] of the Inner Temple, sent me the other day a volume of tragedies, one of which, "Athelwold," is very fine. Do you know him? I never heard the name before.

Now that there is an end of the acted drama, people are writing fine plays.

Mr. Kingsley (almost a neighbour of mine) has just written a fine dramatic poem on the story of Elizabeth of Hungary, called the "Saint's Tragedy"; and another neighbour, whose father and mother I know well, has just written the Oxford prize poem, "Columbus in Chains." It is very elegant, and I rejoice at it, for all their sakes. His father, the Rev. C. Blackstone, was a friend and correspondent of Dr. Arnold. The author of

[1] William Henry Smith (1808–72), the philosopher and poet, and friend of Maurice, Sterling, and Mill.

"Jane Eyre" (believed to be a governess, and to have been brought up at the establishment of Carus Wilson) has published another novel.

September 24, 1848.

Thank you very heartily for your most interesting and welcome letter. The more welcome that it conveyed so good an account of your own improving health. Mine continues much as it was, except that I think myself a little better within these few days. But I vary so much, that I am almost afraid to say so; the rather, that my good little maid observes, that whenever I "brag" of myself, as she calls it, I am sure to fall back almost directly. However, I do all I can to become stronger, and must hope that at last strength will come.

This last month has been delicious as to weather, and I have crept out in the sunny afternoons, and have sat on the fallen trees in the woody lanes on the furzy commons, reading almost till sunset. Air to me is really life, and I cannot understand how any one can live in a town. Your verses gave me great pleasure. It is a charming accomplishment. I wish Mr. ——— could be content to think so: he wears out every subject, pelts everybody with sonnets, and works at a poetical reputation as a woodcutter at making a faggot. Of course this not only does his subject no good, but great harm; besides quite destroying the self-

respect, which ought to be more to a man of sense and virtue than all the poetry in the world.

At Maidenhead there is a Mr. Noel,[1] a first cousin of Lady Byron's, shy and in ill-health, who never came to see me when I was in his neighbourhood, but who sent me his poems, and has written to me once or twice a week ever since. One or two of his poems are exquisite. I was showing them the other day to my neighbour, Mr. Blackstone (the friend and correspondent of Dr. Arnold, as well as the grandson of the judge, and father of the young man whose "Columbus in Chains" has just got the prize at Oxford), and he observed very truly how fine a book might be made from the poets the world had never found out. Many of our old poets, Herrick, for instance, have only recently won their reputation. Of one thing I am sure, that a fidgety impatience like Mr. ——'s only retards the object.

I have just been reading Auerbach's "Village Tales," translated by Meta Taylor, and they seem to me so utterly worthless, that I cannot help

[1] Thomas Noel (1799–1861), author of the song "Rocked in the cradle of the deep." "Mr. Noel resides in a beautiful place in that beautiful neighbourhood [Taplow], leading the life of an accomplished but somewhat secluded country gentleman—a most enviable life and one well adapted to the observation of nature and to the production of poetry, but by no means so well calculated to make a volume of poems extensively known." (Cf. M. R. Mitford, "Recollections of a Literary Life," 1852, i, p. 51.)

begging you to be very sure of the Maximilian ballads before giving yourself the trouble of translating them. Write a nice prose book, dear friend, as little German in its tone as possible, about the real world, even if that real world be Germany, and avoid those hideous nicknames of which these stories are full, as well as their incredible childishness. I am quite sure that this style of writing will never do in England—it has no vitality. You are born for better things. It is my conviction of this, and my earnest desire for your success, that makes me take the liberty of speaking so freely. The only thing that struck me in that long, worthless volume (which I read only on your account) was an assertion about the usual number of a peasant's family, "the customary three children." Are the Germans wise enough to follow this good Malthusian limitation? If so, it really accounts for their comparative prosperity.

I have been reading the "Life and Letters of Dr. Channing," [1] a very long book, where one seems perpetually in presence of a sermon. I know nothing in biography so grave and so ethical; and yet it is ungrateful in me to say a word against one who speaks so kindly of me. I do not mean to say a word against the man; it is his biographer's fault that the book is so heavy. On one point I have intense sympathy with Dr. Channing, his admiration of "Blanco White."

[1] By his nephew, W. H. Channing, 3 vols., 1848.

Daniel O'Connell's secretary has published a delightful two volumes, "Recollections of O'Connell."[1] It is as full of story and character as Boswell's "Life of Johnson." I have also been reading some Puseyite novels, of which the authors seem to me to be mad enough for Bedlam. Fancy one (a Mr. Paget) gravely proposing that all the money usually spent in London during the season should be given the bishops for the use of Holy Church! ! !

Thank you for the list of French books. Mrs. Browning and her husband are still at Florence. I don't think either of them has written anything since their marriage. I am expecting to-morrow a friend from the neighbourhood of Bergholt; not Lady Morton (Mr. Godfrey's widow), but Mrs. Cox, of Lowford, a mutual friend of hers and mine. Lady Morton is also my friend and correspondent and loves to talk of her son's place as being ennobled by its being the scene of so many of Constable's pictures.

Forgive the bad writing; a recumbent position is so much advised, that I write in bed.

December 16, 1848.

Your delightful letter was the first thing that greeted my eyes this Saturday morning, the 16th

[1] "Personal Recollections of O'Connell," by W. J. O'Neill Daunt, 3 vols., 1848.

of December, and on this same day I sit down to bless you for it from the bottom of my heart. I am sixty-one years old to-day. I have never been much of a birthday keeper—partly because we were always a very small family, my father and mother and myself; partly because I early learnt to think how sad anniversaries might become when they only reminded the survivors of dear friends dead and gone! However, you have found a way to sweeten those sad memories, and twenty times to-day with the recollection of my dear father's bright smile and hearty voice, I have thought how very much he would have joined in my affection for you, with what a keen gratitude he would have appreciated your kindness, and how fine a specimen of manhood in youth and in age each would have thought the other.

As it is, I have one female friend come to see me, who is at this instant drying herself from the pouring rain—a lovely woman, still young in mind and person, although turned of forty; and three or four old servants (four indeed), who have come in twenty miles "for auld lang syne"; one of them, who has brought his fiddle, is playing that tune at this instant, to the enchantment of my faithful K.'s sweet little boy. It is something to be surrounded by household ties and homely sympathies. K. has lived with me off and on for half a score years, and will stay with me as long as we shall both be spared, and the other servants

lived with us still longer. The one is the admirable gardener of the great inn at Salt Hill, who, after living with us for fifteen years, married a young woman who had lived with me nearly as long as my own personal servant, and who is really the very model of an intelligent and cultivated man of the people, one in whom the process of self-education has turned to nothing but good. I am very proud of John Lediard and his good little wife. I went to see them this summer, and have never met with a nicer specimen of skill and industry and true English comfort than in his garden and his home.

Now good-bye till to-morrow.

Monday, 18*th*.

Now let me tell you what you will be glad to hear, that I am really better, although the complaint is one of the most fluctuating, and may at any time return in full intensity. However, I am certainly better just now, stronger as far as walking is concerned, although still unable to bear company or excitement. I have not spent an evening out for above a twelvemonth, and I do not think I shall ever be equal to that sort of exertion again. I am very thankful to be as I am now, able to take a walk, to call upon an old friend, and then to come home and lie down and read quietly during the greater part of the night. Dr. May admits that my complaint will

always recur upon over-exertion or over-excitement, indeed, upon any excitement or fatigue, but I must be careful; and there is this hope that another year may be better, that *this* one has been among the most generally unhealthy ever known in England. The hospital surgeons all observe that wounds do not heal, and have almost feared to perform operations on that account.

I do not know whether the papers remarked what a friend who keeps a meteorological journal (is that long word rightly spelt?) told me the other day, that the two very remarkable displays of the northern lights that have been seen here in this century, took place on the two nights preceding the flight of Louis Philippe and the Pope. You remember the remarkable meteors that preceded the battle of Ivry. My friend had written this account of those lights (I saw it myself, and it was magnificent) before hearing of either event. Then there is Mr. Fleming's book on the Papacy printed in 1701 (I have seen one of the old edition),[1] foretelling its downfall in 1794, in 1848, and in 2000. These things are curious.

What is to be the end of the German revolution? I am glad to see Louis Napoleon where he is. Not merely because he is the nephew of his uncle, but because he will have Thiers[2] and Barrot,

[1] "On the Rise and Fall of the Papacy," printed in "Discourses on Several Subjects," 1701.

[2] Miss Mitford changed her opinion of Thiers later.

two of the best heads in France, to guide his councils. I know several persons who used to see much of him in England, and they all say that he is a most amiable, unaffected, unassuming person, without Napoleon's genius, but with much of his charm. *Vogue la galère!* I can't help hoping that he may turn out as Octavius did. Certainly the cases are remarkably alike at this moment.

Have you read Lamartine's "Trois Mois au Pouvoir"? If not, do. It is a curiosity of self-glorification and national flattery, so made up of fine phrases "full of sound and fury signifying nothing," that one would think it the publication of an enemy.

The political writer that I delight in is Cormenin,[1] who seems to me the very king of pamphleteers, the worthy successor of Paul Louis Courier and his great predecessor, Beaumarchais.

Macaulay's "History of James the Second," just printed, is exquisite. Certainly he is our greatest living writer, take him for prose or verse. Don't you think so?

I have been looking over a quantity of translations from the German lately, dearest friend, and really I cannot get on with them. They all seem to me (except of course Schiller and Goethe, especially the first) incomplete as art; poor, bald, coarse,

[1] Louis Marie de la Haye Cormenin, 1788–1868. His works were immensely popular, as many as 60,000 copies of a pamphlet by him being rapidly sold.

without life or character or power. The French have faults in plenty, but then look at their vividness, their artistic truth, their marvellous detail, their life and power. To be sure, I read them in the original, and the German in translations, but the first time I read "The Mysteries of Paris" (and I am far from thinking Eugène Sue the equal of Balzac and George Sand, or even of Charles de Bernard) it was a vile American version, yet I saw there all the truth and beauty of Rigolette, that fresh bit of nature, and the admirable management of the details.

I read a great deal of Uhland and of your Count Auersperg,[1] and I confess I do not think anything will make them popular in England. Just compare their ballads with those of Schiller. It *may* be merely individual taste, but my impression is that the English public cares only for the rationalist divines—people do read *them* either for agreement or for difference; but with regard to other German authors, I found a criticism the other day which seems to me to be true, that they have been made sufficiently known in England to demolish their reputation.

I was amused in reading Carlyle's "Life of Schiller" to see how much less German his style was in that book than now. He wrote the other

[1] Anton Alexander, Graf von Auersperg (1806–76), was an Austrian poet who wrote under the name of Anastasius Grün.

day a character of poor Charles Buller, more outlandish than was ever put forth by a man born within the four seas. Poor Charles Buller! he is lamented as few men ever have been. I know his sister well, a singularly clever and charming person.

I trust that your sister is well, and that you will long be spared to each other. I saw the other day the handsome gipsy who foretold a happy destiny to you and to those whom you love.

Is Balzac married to a rich woman?[1]

Milnes's "Life of Keats" is excellent. He did not die of the "Quarterly," but bore it bravely, and was attended to the last by the most devoted friendship.

[1] Balzac married Madame Hanska in 1850, only three months before his death.

1849

Miss Mitford projected a visit to Paris in the spring of 1849, Henry Chorley to be of the party, but eventually the expedition was abandoned. It is interesting to find her confessing that in spite of her literary knowledge of the French language she does not suppose she will be able to speak a word. It is a condition well known to those who have not learnt a language colloquially. Another project that held her mind at this period was the writing of her autobiography, one likewise never carried out, except in so far as the autobiographical passages scattered through her "Recollections of a Literary Life" are concerned.

Among the interesting people Miss Mitford met this year were Richard Cobden and his wife. She was already an admirer of Cobden's views and great work, and was much impressed with him and charmed

RICHARD COBDEN, 1849.

From the painting by George Patten, A.R.A.

To face p. 114.

with his wife when she saw them face to face. Although Miss Mitford nowhere makes confession of her political creed, it is abundantly clear from her letters that she upheld liberal principles, supported religious tolerance, and advocated the education of the people.

Her reading this year includes books on and by Mirabeau, whom she eulogizes, and by Lamartine, whom she censures. She continues to praise Macaulay, but tempers her approbation somewhat by finding him cold as a historian. It is a curious charge against Macaulay, the warmest of partizans. Miss Mitford has much to say on the value of style and of the importance of form in art. She mentions two new Oxford poets about whom people are talking—"the eldest son of Dr. Arnold" and "a certain Arthur Clough."

Love of nature and also of field sports are shown in these letters. A passage on the nightingale and on the songs of birds in general is notable.[1]

[1] See pp. 133–4.

January 15, 1849.

I will take care that this letter shall be rightly directed, and shall go from the central post-office at Reading, where I can at least ensure their not putting on those vile stamps.

After all, what a far viler thing the spirit of trade (the shop-keeping spirit, as Napoleon used to call it) is, when to a person whom they called a friend they could, for the fractional profit of so much in the thousand stamps, play such a trick. Because they must have known, and they did know, that to cheat you in this infinitely little manner through me, was what would vex me far more than a direct cheating of myself. Thank you very much for telling me ; it has come at a time when it has done me good to accumulate smallnesses in that quarter.

I have been very ill, so ill that nobody expected me to live (I don't mean since I wrote to you last, but in the eight or ten preceding weeks), and little as my poor property is, there will be a few hundreds besides the value of correspondence and so forth, and my good and faithful K. and her poor little boy are the persons to whom, after remembrances to a few dear friends, those few hundreds would go. Well, the persons you wot of, begrudged to her this little help, and have been trying all sorts of influences to make me suspect her ; and failing in that, have shown a degree of passion and

bitterness which are very, very sad. It is a great proof of my being really very much better and stronger that all this worry has not entirely upset me; but better and stronger I really am, and though from the nature of the complaint I may any day be visited by a relapse, I am yet thankful for the present respite, and not unhopeful for the future. So much have I been cheered by this amendment, that I have been seized with the strongest fancy to see what seems to me a great piece of poetical justice—the Heir of Napoleon at the Palace of the Elysée—with my own eyes; and as Henry Chorley, who knows all Paris, is going thither the end of March to assist at the production of Meyerbeer's new opera, "Le Prophète," I have appointed to meet him there, and intend remaining long enough to see the gardens of the Tuileries in all their garniture of leaf and flower.

I shall take my clever little maid and the dear excellent friend who was with me at Taplow, and who, during the course of a very complete medical education, spent some years in Paris; and has, since the death of another younger brother enabled him to leave his profession, frequently revisited the Continent. I wish you could meet us and come back with us to England. Can you? Do. You would like both my escorts. Henry Chorley, clever, crotchety, and good—Mr. Hinton, a thorough and perfect English gentleman, very large-minded,

a great historian and political economist, and quite as good as Henry Chorley, and almost as crotchety in a different direction, nervous and shy. Nevertheless they are admirable persons, both, and you would be sure to like them, and they to be charmed with you, and Henry Chorley might be of great and real use to your literary plans.

He (Henry Chorley) is very intimate with Louis Napoleon, and says of him that he is the impersonation of calm and simple honesty. Mr. Kay Shuttleworth sent me word the other day that he wrote himself every word of his letters, speeches, and proclamations. He has begun well, has he not? Did not that review with its touching scene of the column come in strong contrast to the tawdry, trumpery processions of the Provisional Government? He has not, of course, the genius of his uncle, but he has much of his character—simple, graceful, and manly.

I have been reading Lamartine's "Trois mois au Pouvoir." His worst enemy could not have served him a worse turn than his own vanity has done in collecting and perpetuating those speeches, so hollow, and empty, and sure to come to nothing —as they did. The two most notable things are an address to a class of political economists, in which the ignorance is worthy of Louis Blanc, and the calling Prince Louis Napoleon "M. Charles Louis Bonaparte," a bit of spite which would have done honour to an angry woman.

Do contrive to meet us in Paris. Do—and if not, see if you can send me any letters—especially to persons who know English, for not having written or spoken a word of French for these five-and-forty years, I shall probably be as nervous and as shy about it as Mr. Hinton himself. It's a droll contrast—my total want of command of the spoken language, and the critical pleasure that I take in its writers. But I shall go.

Thank you for thinking about the picture. Our gifted portrait painter, Mr. Lucas, whose fine portrait of my dear father you remember so kindly, was here last week, and he is going to paint me this summer just as I am, a real old woman's portrait, in a close quiet cap, or a close quiet bonnet, such as I wear every day. He adds to the great power of giving a likeness like the looking-glass, consummate taste and feeling, so that he will give the expression a friend wishes to see perpetuated—the best expression—without that departure from truth which is called flattery, which no friend does wish for, because it destroys individuality. He stands now deservedly high in his own branch of art, and being a most dear and valued friend, one of those whose conversation I like best in the world, the process of sitting, usually so painful, will be purely pleasing. After I have spoken to him about an engraving, we can consult Mr. Lupton, whose wish to engrave poor Haydon's picture does me so much honour.

Of course he would greatly prefer following the painting of so eminent a man as Mr. Lucas, to copying that strange, exaggerated, yet very life-like head, even if it could be found. I have not the slightest notion what has become of it. I saw it last in Wimpole Street, two or three years ago, a huge staring face, looking as if guillotined, so closely was it cut out of the canvas, and so over-sized. I must ask Mrs. Browning if she knows what has become of it. But surely you would prefer a head as you know me, and by John Lucas.

Yes, yes, I don't know those German names asunder, but I am sure that I read many hundred pages of translations from the poems of your Auersperg—otherwise Anastasius something. Is not that definitive? I read a dozen or two volumes of translations from Uhland, and divers prosemen and versemen, and I grant you that the translations were bad, but so were the versions of Schiller and Goethe, which I read at the same time, and which (the ballads of Schiller, especially) could not be spoilt. Doubtless Humboldt's letters would have been most interesting. It is wonderful what outrageous blunders translators commit. A certain literary lady here has translated a great part of George Sand, discreetly enough in important points, for a young lady may read her version, but in the very title of one of the books she has contrived to blunder, having rendered "Le Com-

pagnon du Tour de France" "The Companion of the Tour of France," instead of "The Journeyman on his Tour of France"; indeed, she had her choice of two words, and might have said the "workman." But opening the book I found Basse-cour translated "lower court"; the woman had never heard of a poultry-yard!

I wish you would write a great book upon Germany: its society, its religion, its literature, its art. Such a work by some one who really knows the heart of the country, not a mere superficial observer like William Howitt, would be most welcome. Try that the style shall be light, and lively, and graceful, and idiomatic. It is wonderful what mere style does for a book. It made Southey, it has made Macaulay. *His* history is making the greatest sensation that has been made since the poems of Byron and the novels of Scott. People find fault with it as not being enough *one* great picture, being a series of rich pictures instead of one complete work of art. But it is a most beautiful book, and I do not see, the object being attained, that we have any right to find fault with the information being communicated in the manner that the author found most agreeable to himself: as well find fault with the historical plays of Shakespeare because they are not cast into one grand epic. I always thought Macaulay the greatest of our living writers, and it is delightful to find him so completely vindicating my admiration.

Have you read the new volumes of Jérôme Paturot—"Jérôme Paturot à la Recherche de la Meilleure des Républiques"? Do read them. They are full of fun, and a great deal of truth with it. All about George Sand, "Notre Muse," is capital. A friend of mine saw her at a party a short while ago, and heard her say just four words, which happened to be most characteristic. Talking of the Pope, she said, "Il est trop prêtre." Mrs. Browning used a good word about the Italians lately. Talking of the safety of remaining in Florence, she said, "I rely upon the *softness* of my Tuscans." She expects to be confined next month, poor thing! God grant she pass safely through that trial! You must say anything for me to your sister. I reckon her among my friends.

Do you know I am thinking of putting down my recollections—shall I? It seems to me that every autobiography is interesting if faithful and sincere. The weather has been most changeable, sometimes frosty, but oftener wet. I envy you your frozen Danube.

Miss Mitford's reading at this time chiefly related to Mirabeau. When occupied with Montigny's "Life of Mirabeau"—she had borrowed four volumes out of the ten from Rolandi's library and had finished reading them—she was so delighted with

the book that she could not wait to write to London for the remaining volumes, and so went off to ask her neighbour, Sir Henry Russell, who had a fine library, to supply her pressing need. "Vie de Mirabeau par son fils adoptif?" said Russell's daughter, whom on her way to the house Miss Mitford met in the park. "Yes," answered Miss Mitford, "that life of Mirabeau, if Sir Henry happens to have it. If not, any life, any book, by or about him, to serve until I can get the true thing!" In a few hours a horse and cart arrived at Miss Mitford's door, containing a great trunk and a note with a key enclosed. The trunk was full of Mirabeau: orations, letters, lives; almost all that had been written about him "from Dumont's cold, unworthy book to the fine étude of Victor Hugo. I do not think," Miss Mitford wrote, "I even opened a newspaper until I had gone through the whole collection." [1]

February 19, 1849.

Ever since I wrote to you last I have been laid

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," ii, pp. 234–5.

up with influenza. For a fortnight I never stirred from my bed. However, last week's delicious weather set me free again. We have had before the middle of February weather like April; the hedgerows perfumed by violets and primroses, and gay with buttercups, daisies, periwinkles, the fairy blossoms of the wild strawberry, and the long tassels of the hazel. I never remember so forward a spring.

As to frost, we have had only about one week deserving the name through the winter. How I should have liked to see the magnificent scene that you describe so finely.[1] It reminds me of the accounts of the breaking up of the ice on the St. Lawrence. However, I am thankful for last week's sunshine for the good it did me, and the good has remained although the sunshine has vanished. I am still determined upon my journey to Paris, and expect to set out in less than a month. Thank you for promising the letters. Everybody says that my name will be a sufficient introduction, and so forth. Now that is a very pretty speech; but even if it were true, which I do not believe, it would not follow that one could go about proclaiming one's name or pinning one's card upon one's shawl.

I have a fresh reason for desiring to see Paris since I wrote to you, having been reading twenty-one volumes of Mirabeau and about as many of "Mémoires" of that great orator and statesman.

[1] The breaking up of the ice on the Danube.

What a man he was! Have you read the life of him by his "fils adoptif," Lucas Montigny?[1] If not, do, I conjure you. It seems to me the most graphic biography in the language, and gives not only Mirabeau from head to foot, but full-length portraits also of his father and uncle, that odious old Marquis (l'Ami des Hommes) and the Bailli. Read that book, I beseech you. In the Brussels edition you will find an "Étude sur Mirabeau," by Victor Hugo, which is exceedingly striking, as all his detached bits of prose, prefaces, and so forth are. But what a man Mirabeau himself was! and how sure I am that my way of reading all I can gather together upon one subject at once is the best for enjoyment and for the impression that it makes upon the mind. The hatred one conceives for that old Marquis, and the admiration and interest and affection (in spite of all his faults), that one cannot help feeling for his great son, seems a sort of renewal of youth. Of course I had met with works of Mirabeau before and speeches, and had a general knowledge of his story, but now I know him as I know an old friend. What a man to be sure! and how many years in advance of his generation!

Thank you for all you tell me of Lamartine, which

[1] Lucas de Montigny (1782–1852), adopted when a child by Mirabeau, collected every sort of thing appertaining to Mirabeau, and published in eight vols. in 1834–5 "Mémoires, biographiques, littéraires et politiques de Mirabeau, écrits par lui-même, par son père, son oncle et son fils adoptif, Lucas de Montigny."

is exactly my own opinion. He is French to the backbone. Now Napoleon and Mirabeau—Mirabeau especially—were of all time and all countries. They were *men.* I have not seen "Les Confidences"; I have, however, been reading a silly love-story of his called "Raphael." Of course I shall read his "Confidences," and Chateaubriand's "Autobiography," although I hold him also to be greatly overrated. Just read his Indian works, and Cooper's (sad coxcomb as Cooper is!), and one feels at once where the force and, to a certain point, the truth lies. I say to a certain point, for in reality I presume that neither writer is true. By the way, besides my anger at that old Marquis de Mirabeau, I have been exceedingly indignant at Dumont. If he had written Mirabeau's great speeches, why did he not write like that after the great man was dead? Do read Lucas Montigny's "Life" and "Les Discours," and in short, the whole works—do.

Never was a greater hit than Macaulay has made. It is an able work, but to my mind, and I have read it all through very carefully, it is strangely cold. There is a want of sympathy, and, above all, of sympathy with misfortune, which one did not expect from the author of the "Lays of Rome." I, too, like you, was astonished at his omitting that striking scene from "Les Mémoires de Grammont," but I soon found, as doubtless you have discovered by this time) that his hatred of James was such as

would, at all times, prevent his putting down any one thing to his advantage. He is a good hater, and seems to me to take a pleasure in knocking down reputations ;—Dryden, for instance—he really seems to begrudge that great master of English prose and English verse his poor hundred a year ; and Monmouth, for whose tragic history and misfortunes everybody is accustomed to feel a little interest, how he delights in trampling upon him. The only one of his attacks on which I feel a strong sympathy was that upon William Penn. One is amused to think what the Friends will say to their great Founder's trotting to two executions in a day. The only person for whom Macaulay seems to care is that cold, formal Dutchman, who never became English. It is a very able work, nevertheless, but I like a certain enthusiasm, and even hold it essential to the highest literary merit.

My dear friend, Mrs. Cockburn (Lord Byron's first love, Mary Duff), wrote me word the other day that on inquiring for the best and prettiest Fairy Tales to give to her little grand-daughter, her bookseller had given her *your* book. " I only hope," said dear Mrs. Cockburn, " that my little girl may be half as well pleased with it as I have been." She is a most sweet person. I corresponded with her for three years before I found out that her eldest son, who came here with her, was not her husband, so much had she preserved of the youth and loveliness that had charmed the great poet.

So you leave Ratisbon next year! Has it ever occurred to you to take a house in England and take pupils? You are so fitted for that occupation, and your connexions among the very highest persons must render it so easy, I should think, to fill such an establishment. The only thing against it is, I suppose, your not being in Orders; but then that is mere habit and prejudice, because, in point of fact, the clergyman has enough to do with his cure, the tutor with his pupils. You know best, but that seems to me so honourable—so comfortable a way of life—with your dear sister, or with one still dearer and nearer. I should be so glad to know you were happily settled, and somewhere where we could meet often. Thank you for all you say of the biography. I have not been well enough to begin yet, but I shall (D.V.) when I return from Paris. I shall leave the portrait to Mr. Lucas; his taste is perfect.

April 2, 1849.

Thank you a thousand and a thousand times for your great goodness. May I keep the letter you were so very kind as to send me till the autumn? Because it now seems likely that my journey may be postponed till then.

I am just in the discomfort of changing servants, not my own dear little maid, who waits upon me and walks with me, and is literally and really my right hand, but the younger girl who does the

housework, and every now and then grows out of her place and wants promotion and higher wages. This has happened now, and it will not do to let an untried stranger have charge of my poor cottage, so until we have had some experience of the new damsel, who is to come to us at Easter, and whom we chose out of three sisters because she sate at work with a little baby brother on her knee, and had tidy hair and a nice bright and good-natured face. What details to send to one who lives in a palace, and hears the turret clock strike at midnight while the watchman traverses the great corridors. But some day you may have just such a little poetical cottage establishment of your own. I believe you would be very happy in such an one, although, I can't tell why, but I always think that your story will end like a romance, by your marrying some great lady and having a château to your own share. Such things do happen now and then in life as well as in books, and you are just the sort of person to justify such a choice and do honour to such a destiny.

I have heard twice of Mrs. Browning since I wrote to you, the first letter to tell me that she was safely confined with a fine boy; the second, that the mother and infant were going on well. The first letter is the only one I have received from Mr. Browning.

So you are reading Lucas Montigny's "Life of Mirabeau." I am sure it will interest you above all

things—it did me. I got only the first three volumes from Rolandi's, and I could not wait for a parcel from London, but sent about the neighbourhood till I met with a friend who had the book, and who sent me twenty-one other volumes of and about Mirabeau. Amongst these were three other biographies—Dumont's lying book, the "Lettres de Cachet," the "Histoire secrète de la Cour de Berlin," and three very thick volumes of "Discours," containing all his speeches inthe National Assembly. I have also read the two trials with his own memoirs and speeches there, and almost all that he ever wrote, except two or three books that never should have been printed, and the famous "Lettres originales du Donjon de Vincennes," the celebrated letters to Sophie, of which many of the biographies contain long extracts, and which I must read altogether.

The extracts from those letters seem to me as far superior to Rousseau as passion is to sentiment, or truth to fiction. I must have those five volumes. Lucas Montigny is somewhat of a prig, and does not half enough envy, hate, and detest the Marquis and le Bailli; but I go along with him quite in his enthusiasm for that great man his father, whose faults seem to have been mainly produced by the tremendous tyranny of which he was the object. The domestic tyrannies, his family, the crown, the laws of the kingdom—the provincial parliament—all these, acting upon his burning southern tempera-

ment and his tempestuous passions, combined to form that stormy youth; but with all his faults of conduct, how great and how wise a man he was! How much before his age! What a definition of free trade did he give in the brief phrase *laisser faire* and *laisser passer*. What a picture of the French public when he said that for them there were no such words as *toujours* or *jamais*! How genial he was, how kind, how generous, how loveable, how loving! One of his biographers gives a vivid account of the connection of the Marquis with the woman de Pailly, who had been a *femme de chambre* and who ruled them all; and *he* to dare to blame the disorders into which his own avarice and tyranny and his cold-hearted daughter-in-law drove her gifted husband! Does not that unworthy woman resemble Marie Louise? Mirabeau might well say that his flight was too high and too unequal for her.

In one of the memoirs not inserted in "Lucas Montigny" he blames himself "for expecting fruit from a tree that could only bear flowers." Is not this most beautiful in its indulgence and its grace? and how like Napoleon's forbearance to Marie Louise! Do tell me all you think of Mirabeau, and do get the "Discours." They are magnificent.

I have been reading "Les Confidences"[1]—a pretty book which, whether true or not (and to me, especially coming after the realities of Mirabeau, it

[1] By Lamartine.

bears falsehood stamped upon every page), gives one the very worst possible idea of the writer. This pleased me most: next to the having an enthusiasm justified, one likes to find oneself borne out in a prejudice. He is jealous of Napoleon's fame, as all vain men are—as Lord Byron was. But just fancy what Napoleon would have done in his position last February—or Mirabeau. They were men of thought and action, Lamartine is merely a man of words. Just (to exemplify his falseness) watch the dates in "Les Confidences." You will find him fifteen when he makes love in 1805, and twenty in 1815. Indeed, twenty is his favourite age. He sticks at that, just as the maid who is about to leave me called herself nineteen when she came to me two years ago, and calls herself nineteen still. It is clear that the Raphael story is to dovetail in with the end of "Les Confidences," which (in the edition I have seen—is there any continuation?) leaves him on the road to Aix, and to another tragedy. Only fancy a man of sixty writing all this rubbish about girls dying for love of him—a man who is an historian and an orator, and who pretends to be a statesman! Think whether Napoleon or Mirabeau would have done so. The Sophie correspondence came out after the great writer's death, and without his suspecting that it ever would appear.

I have only read the first part of "Chateaubriand." It is interesting, and seems perfectly true.

Talk to me of your impressions of Mirabeau and of these books, and of any new French ones, and tell me what you hear of Louis Napoleon. I have not room here for a pretty story about him that my friend Mr. Hinton told me. He was much beloved and respected at Leamington, where he lived for a year. Above all, tell me of yourself. Poor Hartley Coleridge![1] How the great names go out!

P.S.—I am reading another collection of Horace Walpole.

May 6, 1849.

If I wanted anything beyond my own regard for you and your own most kind letters, I should be reminded of you by the nightingales which are just now singing in such abundance, and peopling all the woods and fields with the notes that you have described so well. We have one most exquisite bird in my poor garden. Oh, such a bird! Did you ever remark how much nightingale differs from nightingale in force and power and sweetness and variety? I have often noticed it, but never so much as this year, when *our* bird, as K. proudly calls it, and one of equal quality about two miles off, seem to me to excel all their compeers as much as the greatest singer of the opera beats his inferiors of the chorus. Now surely this is not the case with other feathered songsters. Blackbird does not differ from blackbird, nor thrush from thrush. K. and I,

[1] Died January 6, 1849.

agreeing perfectly in the superiority of the *two*, dispute as to their separate merits, I rather preferring the distant singer, whom I go to hear every night, she fighting stoutly for *our* neighbour of the garden, as I believe, because it is ours; such is the magic of the possessive pronoun, even when the application be a mere fiction, as our beloved bird will indicate when he and his mate have reared their family, and they all fly away. All happiness go with them! I love those birds as if they were conscious of my gratitude and affection; and really, I half think that my pet, the far-off neighbour, does know my love for him, for he never fails to salute me as often as I draw near.

How very kind your German and French friends are to me: I owe it chiefly, of course, to your partiality, to which I am but too proud to owe all manner of benefits, but yet I have been accustomed to feel grateful for the good opinion of German readers of English books. It is astonishing how well they know our literature, and how little, to judge from French writers, our authors are known in France. The only one whom they appear really to appreciate is Mrs. Radcliffe—Anne Radcliffe, as they call her, for they do not even mis-spell her name. It is quite amusing to see how much a writer, wellnigh forgotten in England, is admired in France. I dare say, now, you never read a page of her novels, and yet such critics as Ste.-Beuve, such poets as Victor Hugo, such novelists as Balzac

and George Sand, to say nothing of a thousand inferior writers, talk of her in raptures. I will venture to say that she is quoted fifty times where Scott is quoted once. Indeed, I believe that the *real* merits both of Scott and Shakespeare are little known to them, although they may know the stories of both from operas and so forth, as the mob of the English (by the way) know Beaumarchais' great comedies. I used to think that Shakespeare could not be at all rendered in French, but Alfred de Vigny has made a very fair translation of "Othello," and Madame Tastu has executed the more difficult task of transposing the garden scene of "Romeo and Juliet" into verse that is really high poetry.

When you thank your fair friend for her goodness to me, tell her that I still hope to deliver her letter. Perhaps in the autumn, for Paris will be too hot for me now, although the weather here is very cold and stormy. The hail the other day swept every chimney in the house, and did much mischief to garden and fields. Henry Chorley says I had no loss in not meeting him in Paris, for that he never felt so strongly the miserable hollowness and trustlessness of the French character under the thinnest possible crust of gaiety. Well, I hope better things. I like their literature, with all its faults, and am well disposed to like them. Tell me if, with all his faults, Mirabeau is not adorable, and yet you ought to read his "Discours" and his "Mémoires pour Consulter," and a great deal besides, that good M. Lucas Mon-

tigny would not put into his book, because, forsooth, it had been printed before. He is a sad prig, and yet I should like to know him, too, for the sake of the great man whom he has written about. I wish I were likely to see you this summer, but I fear there is no such good luck in store.

September 10, 1849.

I can hardly tell you how much pleasure your letter gave me—the very sight of your handwriting before I opened it—for I had got afraid that you were ill. You spoil me by your great kindness and goodness and punctuality; and then I recollected your fever, and this year has been so rife of disease, that one becomes frightened at the least delay in a letter from a distant friend. Soon, very soon, I hope you will be within reach; shall you not? Do you not come to England next spring? There is no one, not even Mrs. Browning, whom I should more rejoice to feel as within comeatable distance—to see very often, and to know all about. The stanzas on the nightingale are very beautiful, but I like the writer better even than the exquisite bird, and had rather hear all about him (which in rare and distant letters is difficult, if not impossible) than even his verses.

I am better and stronger than last year, and should have been greatly so, but for a terrible attack of neuralgia on the left side of the face—the real regular neuralgia, intermittent and without

MRS. COBDEN.

From a photograph.

To face p. 137.

inflammation; downright tic, in short—which I caught at a party at Whiteknights, where I spent a long out-of-door day with Baron Goldsmid and his charming family, and Mr. and Mrs. Cobden—they and I, out of thirty persons, the only Christians. Did you ever see this hero of free trade? He impressed me exceedingly. I expected to find a very clever, powerful man, but coarse and elderly—a man out of a counting-house. On the contrary, he is young-looking, full of taste, grace, elegance, and refinement, playful and gentle in the highest degree. The wife is a true English beauty, rosy round face, and with the sweetest expression possible. I saw a great deal of him, sitting next him at dinner, and walking about those beautiful grounds side by side with him and Miss Goldsmid, who is herself so very clever a woman that her conversation brings out everybody's best.[1]

Do you know much of the Jews? I have always been interested in the whole race, and my friend, Miss Goldsmid, has taken pains to make me acquainted with them. She has given me a volume of sermons translated, and very finely translated, by herself, from the German, of one of their priests named Salomon. They are full of charity and

[1] Cf. "Letters of Mary Russell Mitford," ed. Chorley, 1872, ii, p. 102. "I was delighted with him [*i.e.*, Cobden], and to say truth a little surprised, having expected an older, rougher man; what astonished me was his simplicity and playfulness, his elegance and refinement. His wife, too, is sweetly pretty."

brotherly love, and deserve to be put on the same shelf with the "Lettres spirituelles" of Fénelon, and the works of Channing and Arnold, which they resemble in largeness of heart and in indulgence to human error. Except Josephus, I never read any work of a Jewish author before out of the Bible, and unluckily I am not likely to read many, the greater number being, she tells me, in Hebrew, some in Latin, many in Spanish at the time when the Moors were in Spain, and art and science almost in the exclusive hands of the Jews—and now almost all the Jewish publications are in German. I tell you this because, if any of their works fall in your way I think they would interest you. I am sure Salomon's sermons would. He is still alive and working in that great work of brotherly love. Miss Goldsmid is a noble woman.

Here we have been hitherto free of cholera. It has been lurking about in some of the Buckinghamshire villages, upon clay, and amongst those who gather rags for the paper mills, and so trade in dirt, but generally in the country it has kept away. In London it certainly is more widely diffused than is known.

I dined yesterday after a church stone-laying (where the goose who laid the stone actually put on eight trowels-full of mortar, not knowing that the whole affair was make-believe), in company with two notabilities fresh from London, the Bishop of

Oxford (Wilberforce) and Baron Rolfe,[1] and both said that they knew of twenty cases in the best streets in town.

The Baron is really clever, and his wife very pleasant and intelligent. They are only here for a short time, having taken the house of a neighbour of mine while his family is abroad. Very few people comparatively *have* gone abroad this year. I myself still indulge in visions of Paris. Don't you like the conduct of the President? He seems to me quite the ideal of a good prince; because I am convinced that the intervention at Rome (although mismanaged by its agents—the persons intrusted with its execution) was intended to prevent the evils of reaction. It has now become a serious difficulty, in consequence of the idiotism of the Pope. A twelvemonth ago a friend of mine heard George Sand say of him, "Il est trop prêtre," which has turned out a most just criticism, one of those revelations of character which are almost predictions.

Those nightingale verses are very beautiful, especially the last stanza. Do you think the song melancholy? I do not. It is too full of energy and spirit, has too much verve. I remember a charming letter of poor Charles Fox vindicating the cheerfulness of the song. We have two new

[1] Robert Monsey Rolfe (1790-1868), Baron of the Exchequer, created Baron Cranworth, 1850, and appointed Lord Chancellor, 1852.

poets at Oxford, one the eldest son [1] of Dr. Arnold, whose book I have not seen. It is said to be fine; the other a certain Arthur Clough, who is a poet in the highest sense. Many of his pieces are painfully sceptical. There is now a great reaction there, consequent upon Puseyism, and many of the cleverest young men doubt of all. But this one is a fine poet at all events; that is certain.

December 27, 1849.

Thank you a thousand times for your kind wishes and charming letter. I had begun to be fretful and fidgety about you, and to think your silence long—a very sure proof of my affection; for in a general way I care little for letters, but from you and one or two more I love to hear. Yes, by all means write the Chamois-hunting book. Two of the most charming productions for many years have been a work on Deer-stalking, I think, by Mr. Scrope,[2] and another still pleasanter by Mr. St. John,[3] containing a sort of diary of field sports in Scotland, all sorts of field sports mingled with all sorts of natural history. The more minute the better—the more graphic and dramatic; a chamois hunt should be a

[1] Matthew Arnold, "The Strayed Reveller and other Poems," 1849.

[2] "Days of Deer-stalking in the Forest of Athole," 1847, by William Scrope.

[3] "A Tour in Sutherlandshire, with extracts from Field-books of a Sportsman and Naturalist," 2 vols., 1849, by Charles W. G. St. John.

story. All my youth was passed among sportsmen, especially coursers. My father kept eight or ten brace of first-rate greyhounds, belonged to three or four of the great clubs, and has won cups and goblets in his time. I used to delight in coursing, wrote a poem on it, and was quite as good a judge of a greyhound as of a cricketer. But indeed I love all sorts of field sports and hold it to be a natural instinct. Indeed, I am apt to have a slight contempt for the mere penman who can neither bring down a pheasant nor ride up to hounds.

Up to my dear father's death, seven years ago, we used to take in two or three sporting periodicals, and I used to read them to him of an evening. Of course these periodicals contained a good deal about the different continental sports—wild boar hunting, stag shooting, hunting the chamois, etc. Whether there be any work of importance on the last mentioned diversion, I cannot tell, nor is it of consequence. It is altogether an affair of execution. Be graphic, be minute, be dramatic, make an actual existing person of the chamois, and a narrative of the chase, and you will be sure to prosper.

I love all field sports except a battue, which I detest ; as well shoot down the poultry in a farmyard, as the game in a well-stocked preserve. The legitimate pleasure of the thing is, that it is a pursuit —a seeking and finding, not a mere slaughter.

Do not let me forget to tell you that in a catalogue of Monroe's books of Cambridge Uni-

versity (U.S.) and Boston, I find "The Dream of Lillan Tuk" translated by Charles Boner. The catalogue is so select that it is really a compliment. The number of American books that I have received lately is extraordinary; all good; none very good—bits of Longfellow are the best, and an exquisite piece of a speech of Daniel Webster's in an elegant volume called "The Boston Book for 1850."

Yes, Esther is very fine, so are all the series of "Illusions perdues" stories, to which that belongs, especially the second "Un grand Homme de Province à Paris," which is, I think, Balzac's very best novel. Mrs. Browning says she hears a wretched account of him, personally, from an American authoress,[1] and I am well disposed to believe it, for with all his great artistic power the man himself seems quite devoid of generous sentiment and kind impulse. Nevertheless he is a great writer.[2]

Mrs. Browning says that her little boy is the wonder of Italy for strength and size. She herself was well enough this summer at the baths of Lucca to climb the courses of extinct volcanoes,

[1] Miss Fuller (Mme. Ossoli).

[2] Cf. "Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," ed. Kenyon, 1897, i, p. 428. "Balzac went into the world scarcely at all, frequenting the lowest cafés, so that it was difficult to track him out. Which information I receive doubtingly. The rumours about Balzac with certain parties in Paris are not likely to be too favourable nor at all reliable, I should fancy."

on donkeys, and to lose herself on foot in the chestnut forests. Mr. Lever was there, and we exchanged tender messages. I like his books, and everybody says that the man himself is most brilliant and most charming. Tell me, don't you like the President of the French Republic? I do. He seems to me too good for that fickle nation. Lamartine's "Revolution of 1848" is curiously vain and egotistic, even for him. The only interesting part was the account of the running away of the Royal Family.

You don't say anything about your return to England. Tell me your plans when they are formed. I take the truest interest in them.

1850

The letters for 1850 extend from February to November. At the beginning of the year Miss Mitford's health was greatly improved, but an outbreak of smallpox at Reading, when her gardener and her maid's little boy were attacked, caused her much worry and uneasiness. She kept them both in the house and both recovered, and no other member of the household suffered. The man had been vaccinated, the maid who nursed him had had smallpox "the natural way" some years before, and Miss Mitford herself "had been inoculated after the old fashion." As is clear, Miss Mitford was willing to take risks, but she declared that she had lost all faith in vaccination.

At the beginning of the year Boner sent Miss Mitford in manuscript the first four chapters of his book on chamois hunting. It had adventures on the way, not arriving

until many weeks after it was due, and causing Miss Mitford much distress of mind. Writing to Mrs. Ouvry in March, 1850, she says: "A dear friend of mine sent me the first four chapters of a most vivid, striking book on 'Chamois Hunting in the Mountains of Germany.' Consulting me as a *confrère*—a brother sportsman—he posted it at Ratisbon, with a separate letter. The letter came viâ Paris; the packet (and no copy had been kept) wandered about during two months, and at last reached me through Hamburg and Hull. I really believe our London Post Office picked it up, for they behaved like angels upon the occasion."

Miss Mitford criticized Boner's manuscript with candour, while she gave it high praise.

It is curious that Miss Mitford, despite the catholicity of her reading, should have been wholly unable to appreciate or understand Carlyle. The reference to his opinion of Miss Barrett's poetry is interesting. The statement, however, that he lost an admirer in Miss Barrett is not in accord-

ance with fact. In her letters during 1844 Miss Barrett refers to Carlyle in terms of respect and admiration; he wrote her a "delightful letter" on her marriage. In 1851, while on a visit to London, Mrs. Browning went to see Carlyle, "one of the sights in England to my mind," and he travelled back with her and her husband as far as Paris; "it is difficult to conceive a more interesting human soul, I think," Mrs. Browning wrote on that occasion both to Miss Mitford and Mrs. Jameson.

In May Miss Mitford was again ill, and had to confess her inability to receive Boner, who was in England, except for an occasional hour.

In the summer of 1850 Henry Chorley, who had taken over the editorship of the "Lady's Companion," a weekly journal belonging to Bradbury and Evans, the circulation of which had greatly fallen off, asked Miss Mitford to come to his aid. She undertook to write for him a series of papers to be entitled "Readings of Poetry, Old and New." They were published in book form in

1852, in three volumes, as "Recollections of a Literary Life."

The cottage at Three Mile Cross in which Miss Mitford had lived since 1820 was now in so bad a state that she determined to leave it unless the owner put it into proper habitable condition. "In truth," she writes, "it was leaving me. All above the foundation seemed mouldering, like an old cheese, with damp and rottenness. The rain came dripping through the roof and streaming through the walls. The hailstones pattered upon my bed through the casements, and the small panes rattled and fell to pieces every high wind. My pony was driven from his stable by a great hole where the bricks had fallen out of the side, and from the coach-house, where he was led for refuge, by a huge gap in the thatch above. There was some danger that his straw bed must be spread in the little hall; but the hall itself was no safer, for one evening, crossing from the door to the staircase, I found myself dragging off the skirting-board by no stronger a compulsion than the flounce of a

muslin gown. The poor cottage was crumbling around us."

February 1, 1850.

I cannot tell you how much your most kind letter rejoiced me. I only got it to-day, the MS. not yet received. But although I shall not finish my epistle till it arrives, I cannot but begin my reply to your letter at once. How like you is that frankness about your plans! and how natural your hesitation! Oh, that I were rich! It is at such times that one feels such a desire, because, accepting me as a sort of aunt, you would not mind. As it is, one does not know how to advise. It seems to me certain that such a person as you must get on, and yet when one looks at two or three tragical histories of our own times, notably of that of Gerald Griffin, with youth and genius and considerable reputation, and I greatly fear there are more tragedies and worse than that tragedy of a broken heart. When one thinks of these things one fears. Another thing, too, makes one ready to advise against one's own earnest wishes, and that is the high value, the just value, which they evidently set upon you where you are. It is much to be fully esteemed, valued, and appreciated. It is what rarely happens to a very superior person in his own country, or even in his own family. Have you never observed this? Still I do most earnestly wish that something may make it right and expedient for you to come to

England. I am sixty-three years old, and cannot of course look forward to what would carry me even beyond the threescore years and ten.

It must be as you think right, for that is the safest way of deciding after all. I remember my oldest friend, William Harness, when inquiring of me if I knew of a tutor for Mr. Hope's family, saying, "If I were a single man I would take the situation myself." He was wedded, like you, to a sister; a sister twenty years younger than himself, who has always made him the nicest little wife in the world. It is a charming natural tie, the most so of all. I always longed for a brother to be proud of and look up to.

Well, I have been in great trouble since I wrote to you last, and am still in a sort of quarantine. About two months ago my man who drives the little pony carriage, and takes care of my garden, a very steady and respectable servant, was seized with smallpox after vaccination. I was advised to send him away, but we owe duties to others and of course ought to fulfil them; so we did the best we could. He was very, very ill, delirious nearly a fortnight, not a nurse could be got for love or money, and the weather was tremendous. However, we got through it, and then my dear maid K.'s little boy, who had been sent home here from his school at Reading because smallpox had broken out next door—he took it, and both his mother and I gave him up. I bless God, however, that he too

has recovered; but the people still pass on the other side of the way, and a carriage stops and leaves a card and makes a hurried inquiry. Everybody dreads the infection, and everybody is right. I have lost all faith in vaccination either as preventing or mitigating smallpox. I know of thirty severe cases, five of them fatal, in my own immediate neighbourhood this winter, besides those in my own family, and in Reading it has been a pestilence.

K. had had the smallpox the natural way, and I had been inoculated after the old fashion, so we escaped. Our under-maid had been vaccinated for the second time two years ago, but we are not sure about her yet. K., who is a perfect sister of charity in illness, has suffered so much from anxiety and fatigue, that I am alarmed about her.

I have not been ill, for which I am very thankful. That dreadful tic, Mr. May says, is manageable in my case, because it has not taken the hold of my constitution that it does when it seizes people in earlier life. But I have great reason to be thankful that I have not had it this winter, between the cold and the worry.

If K. be well enough, I should like to go to town in a fortnight to see a play by Henry Chorley, which is coming out at the "Surrey." The author read it to me when he was writing it, and would like to see me there the first night. He who lives much with fine people and thinks them cold (I suppose they are so) says that he likes the notions

of a Faubourg audience, but I am rather afraid that neither audience nor actors will be quite equal to a most refined and elegant blank-verse comedy. It is called "Old Love and New Fortune," and is very beautifully written.[1] The books I have liked best lately are "Southey's Life and Letters," and "Shirley," by the author of "Jane Eyre."

P.S.—Feb. 21. Henry Chorley's play has succeeded, I am glad to say, although I could not get to see it. I must go to town when you come there.

March 18, 1850.

The MS. I shall keep for your orders. I hope you will come and fetch it in person. I have only cursorily looked over the pages. They seem to me very delightful. There is a tinge of un-English idiom all through, too subtle, perhaps, to be caught, but there it is, and there let it be. It rather, in my mind, adds to the *couleur locale*. It tells its own true story: I am written by an English gentleman—scholar, poet, and sportsman as well as gentleman—who has lived long abroad.

You cannot imagine how much better I am than I have been during the last two or three years. I think that ever since violeting began I have walked eight or nine miles every day. We have had glorious weather; hardly a drop of rain for

[1] It was performed February 18, 1850, at the Surrey Theatre, with Creswick in the principal part.

this month past, and dust enough to ransom all the kings of the earth.

P.S.—I have now read the whole MS. attentively, and I am charmed with it. There are certain passages quite charming; one about the effect produced on the mind by the immobility of the mountains, the absence of trees, or anything that can move—another on a Bible picture of Jacob leaning on his staff, with a little personal remark at the end, which is most touching and beautiful—the perfection of taste; just enough to interest, not a word too much. The idiom, too, goes off; a little remains, but only what adds to the individuality. It would be difficult to alter, and I would not if I could. Most sportsmen writing are more prodigal of their shootings. They like to report a great number of killed; but I think there is more interest, as well as more truth in your sobriety, in that respect, the death of the one chamois—than in such a multiplied slaughter. I am sure of the success of that book.[1] It is original and true, and the strong feeling against all this revolutionary excess which prevails in England will carry your readers along with the forester's lamentations over the slaughter of the chamois by the peasantry. I repeat, I am sure of

[1] "Chamois Hunting in the Mountains of Bavaria," published in 1854.

the book. It is full of poetry, full of you, and worth a million of Andersen's.

April 7, 1850.

My good opinion of the book[1] has gone on increasing. Don't alter it at all. Don't change the style; it gives to it individuality and identity, and really it is graceful and pretty, and the whole book will be charming. I have read almost all that Carlyle has written, and was, like you, much struck with his "Hero-Worship." I am afraid, however, I do not like him quite as well as you do. In the first place I have a firm persuasion that clear thoughts make clear words, and that where great obscurity exists in the language, the fault will generally be found lower and deeper. In the next, I detest and abhor certain atrocities and abominations, which I suppose he means for humour, and which abound especially in the two huge volumes about Cromwell. Thirdly, I mistrust his sincerity and earnestness, chiefly because he says one thing on Monday and another on Tuesday, contradicting himself with as little scruple as he contradicts other people.

I am told by his admirers that the French Revolution is his great work. Perhaps it may be, only I am quite convinced that nobody who did not know the story previously would gain the slightest idea of it from Mr. Carlyle's three volumes, and

[1] Ibid.

that is not my theory of a history. His last work, which I have not seen, is said to be eminently socialist, but until translated into English I would always give him the benefit of a doubt. For the rest he has a large following, and is so glad to increase it that you would be received with open arms. Of poetry he is intolerant—at least two friends of mine, Elizabeth Barrett and Mr. Bennett, each sent him a present of their works, and received answers so nearly alike (I saw both of them), that it seemed to me a set form, kept for the purpose. He praised the powers of both lady and gentleman, but deprecated the use made of them, and advised both parties "to say rather than to sing," which advice, being construed, meant, I suppose, to take to prose instead of verse.[1]

The counsel lost him both his admirers. I have never heard either of them mention his name since. For my own part I never saw him, and having never had any sort of intercourse with him, am at least free from personal prejudice. Do you know

[1] Cf. letter from Elizabeth Barrett to Robert Browning, February 17, 1845: "I am a devout sitter at his [Carlyle's] feet —and it is an effort to me to think him wrong in anything— and once when he told me to write prose and not verse, I fancied that his opinion was I had mistaken my calling— a fancy which in infinite kindness and gentleness he stooped immediately to correct. . . . I do not know him personally at all, but as his disciple I ventured to send him my poems, and I heard from him as a consequence." ("The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett," 1899, i, p. 25.)

Emerson, the American essayist? It seems to me that he would have been a great writer and thinker, if Carlyle had not fallen in his way. Now he appears a mere copyist of the Scotchman. At one time I apprehended his queer jargon to be German idiom (I mean Carlyle's), although his "Life of Schiller" comes nearer to English than his later works, but a German Jewess, who was talking to me about him, said he was the most difficult English author that she had ever attempted to translate into German.

After you have read more of him, you will like him less. I am quite sure that your fine taste will be repelled by the horrible coarseness of some of his nicknames in the Cromwell book. He is constantly talking of flunkeyism, and trades upon half-a-dozen cant words of that order.

Oh, how I should have liked to see that mask of Napoleon! His face is the very ideal of beauty in all the prints and paintings: the upper part all power, the lower all sweetness. The greatest sin ever committed by a nation was ours in letting that great man perish at St. Helena.

I have just finished the third volume of "Southey's Life and Letters": all his old friends complain of the selection and the omissions, and say that Cuthbert Southey, the son, who is editing the work, is a young man quite incompetent to choose from the enormous mass of correspondence at his disposal. I only hope that all will be even-

tually published, for although there is much in which I do not agree, I delight in the letters and could read a hundred such.

How very glad I shall be to see you! You must be here as much as you can. Perhaps I shall be in town part of the time. The more I think of the stag part the less I think any change will be needed. I like the book more and more.

May, 1850.

I received your letter to-day (Saturday) and immediately did up your MS. (that charming MS.) and sent it into Reading with a note to the post-master, commending it to his especial charge, and I have his answer in return. There has been some delay in the few notes that have passed between us since your arrival in London, although I cannot find out exactly at what point. I received your first despatch on Wednesday, and answered it by return of post. That note you ought to have got on Thursday. Now to-day comes your second note, undated, but clearly written as soon as you had read mine. I tell you this, first of all to clear myself from any neglect or delay in the transmittal of the MS.; in the second place to show that it will be necessary to give two or three days' notice of your arrival. I can send to meet you, and I need not say with what pleasure.

This illness of mine has been very badly timed, for I had hoped to go to town for a week or two,

and I should have been charmed to have timed it so as to meet you there, but now I cannot venture. It seems as if I could bear no excitement or fatigue. On Thursday I was so much better as to take a short drive, but yesterday feverish symptoms all returned, and I was so ill as not to get up all day. To-day I am better again, and I hope the amendment will continue, but I shall gain no real strength until I am able to be in the air for a long time every day. It is a necessity with me—is the open air.

I sent a little note in the packet to say how sure I felt of the success of the Chamois Shooting, and that I was always more fastidious with the works of a friend than with those of a stranger. I did this because, however little worth my opinion might be, it may still go for something with a bookseller, and it is only the truth. That book cannot fail of success. Let me know that you receive the packet.

May 28, 1850.

I have so entire a reliance upon your kindness and upon your knowledge of my sincere attachment to you, that I think it best to be quite frank with you, even although it seems inhospitable to be so. The fact is that I continue so poorly that the prospect of receiving you for some days, which would, if I were well, give me most unmixed pleasure, has become a source of anxiety to me. I have no one to supply my place in endeavouring

to entertain you—no near neighbour even to whom I could delegate so pleasant an office, and I myself, although I have two or three times got out for a drive, have only left my room to get into my little carriage, and have been obliged to go to bed as soon as I returned; nor do I seem likely to be soon equal to greater exertion. Under these circumstances you will understand how very much I should feel vexed that a friend whom I so much value should be solitary in my poor cottage, where, except books, there would be nothing on earth to contribute to his amusement, and how entirely this consciousness would weigh upon me and increase the inability which I so lament.

The rooms, too, which I had hoped to secure for you are at present occupied, and it seems to me better to say this at once, and to beg you to let me see you as you did before for a day—to which I hope to be equal; rather than to drag you from all the temptations of society and amusement in London, without being able to offer you even my poor company here. Even Mr. ——, who could have taken you about to see what is worth visiting in this neighbourhood, has shown himself so meddling that I have ceased to have intercourse with him for above a year.

Pray forgive this truth speaking. My good nurse-maid, who knows me better than anybody else, and is the best and kindest creature that lives, has prompted me to do so, and yet I can hardly

bear what seems so ungrateful and so inhospitable. Let me hear of the fate of the Chamois Shooting, and pray do not think ill of me.

May 31, 1850.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking so kindly what it so much vexed and shocked me to write. I believe though that I was right, for I have only seen two friends, one on indispensable business, since I have been ill, and although much better on the whole, I can never answer for myself for two days together. Indeed, I believe it is consciousness of having no one to take my place that frets me more than anything. Except when I have an honoured guest I never feel this, for I am accustomed to live alone and like it—books are really enough for me—but I shall be charmed to see you in a little while, and you must be sure to let me know when you can come. I have much to say to you, and more to hear. Did I tell you that this poor cottage is falling to pieces, and that I have given notice to quit? The owner is a young boy, a ward in Chancery, and the Receiver under the Master a man who is letting all the houses go to ruin to save himself trouble, so that there is no chance of having it repaired. This grieves me much.

P.S.—I should be quite well enough to see you for a day before you went into Devonshire. It is

only any length of time that would try me, because I should then try to get up sooner and stay up later. For a day if it suited you, dear friend, I could manage quite well, and then we could talk over a longer visit after your return from Devonshire. I should not dream of having anybody to meet you. This is quite the truth.

July 3, 1850.

I have been sore afraid that you misconstrue my feelings respecting you. You must make allowances for my peculiar situation with regard to visitors. I live quite alone with no one to help me to entertain my friends. My health is so uncertain that I never can get to a friend before one or two in the day, and sometimes (as to-day) I do not find it possible to get out before four or five. I myself take what serves me for breakfast and dinner in bed, and am ill if I do otherwise. All these habits are probably bad, but they are so fixed that my medical friends say I must not change them ; that I have made my life and must persevere.

If in anything I have failed, pardon it. It had no origin in want of regard, I assure you. Write to me very soon and say that you see my difficulties and forgive them. I have so little to offer. I have written fourteen articles for Henry Chorley—they will, I hope, do him good, and he says that they will make a pretty graceful book.[1] They are of

[1] "Recollections of a Literary Life," published in 1852.

things little known, and I think you will like them. Do come and let us talk it over, and your charming book too.

I can't tell you how glad I was to get your letter and to hear I was likely to see you. I am so conscious of the odd way in which I live, and of the real shortcoming in the way of hospitality, that especially when I am poorly must make itself felt, owing to my having nobody to supply my place, and living with so few servants at such a distance from a town, that I was really afraid I had said or done something insupportable, even to one so very kind and indulgent as yourself. Thank God I was mistaken! It is only with respect to one whom I love dearly that I should so fidget myself; for in general mere acquaintances worry me, and the less I see of them the better; but when I once love a friend I cling to him, and am in proportion vexed at the chance of any discomfort between us. Thank you heartily for your most kind letter. I shall be so glad to see you again. Ever since you went away I have been very busy. I have written the articles of which I send you a list. I should not wonder if the whole made two volumes. It is first to be published in "The Lady's Companion," which Henry Chorley is editing; but, of course, the real temptation is the putting it into a book afterwards; a very pretty book it will be, the extracts being for the most part capital and very little known, and my prose as good, I think, as I ever wrote. It is really

a comfort to me to find that I write no worse after so long a cessation. My prose is sometimes Introductions (one in the "Our Village" style I wrote the Sunday night you went away), sometimes criticisms or biographies of the authors. I think you will like it. William Harness tells me to-day of a certain Barnes, a Dorsetshire poet. Ask about him, he says he is excellent, and you are likely to hear of him in the West. I had a letter to-day from poor Mrs. Haydon, after a silence of years. She says her son Frederick is coming to Reading and will call here. If he is here a fortnight hence, I hope you and he will meet.

I am sure that your book will be charming.

The horse that threw Sir Robert (Peel) was a Berkshire horse, called Repealer. My man had the care of him before he came to me two years ago. He played no tricks then, but afterwards, when sold to another neighbour of mine, he used to throw the stable-boys who mounted him for exercise, and was altogether unfit for a bad rider like poor Sir Robert Peel to mount.

August 8, 1850.

Mrs. Praed, poor dear, has been nursing her children in scarlet fever, but has now sent me all the materials, memorandum book and all. It will be a capital article,[1] so will, or rather so is, Catherine

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," i, p. 158.

Fanshawe,[1] and I have some fine translations by Leigh Hunt.[2] I did not think it had been in him.

October 5, 1850.

Thank you heartily for your interesting letter. I see what the Chamois Shooting will be by what the real and actual adventures are; and before I forget it, let me ask you if you, while in England, heard talk of a novel called "The Initials"?[3] Mr. Lovejoy's catalogue lays it to Mrs. Eastlake. William Harness says that the authorship is a secret, and that it is attributed to some young men who went to board in Munich to acquire complete mastery over German. At all events it is a clever book—wants only a little of being very clever, and as it mentions chamois shooting after a fashion that rather leads one to apprehend it may be a woman's handiwork. Inasmuch as it is thoroughly unsportsmanlike, it will be of the greatest use to you by exciting curiosity about the subject without gratifying it. The Lion-hunting book, too, is abundant Münchhausenish—has had an article of the "Times" given to it in that character, and will really do good to a truthful and moderate work on field-sports, so that these things are working for you.

[1] Cf. "Recollections of Literary Life," i, p. 249.
[2] Ibid., ii, p. 173. [3] By Baroness Tautphœus.

The "Initials" contains a strange homely primitive picture of Bavarian social life. A Baroness is shown superintending the making of soup!—a Major's wife ironing her husband's shirts, and all the accomplished ladies of what we should call the middle classes—people who play and sing and speak languages—as doing their own cookery! Is this so? The book has had a great success, rather more than it deserves, but the result is that one believes these things.

You are very good in wishing to know about my poor doings. I have written twenty-six articles.

I shall make about forty articles, the next being "Chatterton." [1] You should just see what materials I have got for political squibs. The Rolliad and Probationary Odes (my own copy long lost and oddly recovered)—five volumes of "New Foundling Hospital for Wit," nine volumes of "Poetical Register," eleven of "Spirit of Public Journals," five volumes of "Peter Pindar"—the thick quarto of the famous "Westminster Election," when the Duchess of Devonshire got a vote for a kiss, and the thin quarto of "Poems of the Anti-Jacobins."

Poor Henry Chorley has got the gout in his right hand, and really when one considers the vile trash of vanities, fineries, and frivolities contained in "The Lady's Companion," and the stern and earnest protest against all such trumpery held forth in the greater part of my articles, especially

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," iii, p. 1.

those on William Spencer and Clare, it does seem as strange a conjunction as ever was beheld. When gathered together in their own volumes they will at least have the merit of consistency.

I shall see on Tuesday a lady (Mrs. Cox), my old schoolfellow, who inhabits the next parish to Bergholt, and thinks of Constable as you like him to be thought of. At your lodgings we have just now a Mr. Pasmore, an artist, who is painting the wheelwright's shop—an interior—and will, I really think, make a fine thing of it; at once rich, deep, and clear. Did you ever go into that curious old shop with its high open roof? It is singularly picturesque and affluent in details. I am to lend him K.'s little boy for a foreground figure. With regard to my house, this vexatious suspense still continues. A builder has been over it to make an estimate, and there is to be a new Receiver under the Master on the first of next month; so, as new brooms sweep clean, there may be some chance that the repairs may then be set about, or rather perhaps next spring, if by any chance we can get through the winter. But the builder declared he had never seen a place in such a state in his life, and how we and the pony shall get through the time I really cannot tell. Now that I have given over all ambition respecting flowers I have some magnificent seedling dahlias, some of the most beautiful either for shape or colour that I ever saw. It is a splendid flower,

too, and tends to re-awaken one's old feelings. We had one fine seedling last year and lost it through overcare, but I trust to save these. Only think of M. de Balzac [1] being dead! A great writer with all his faults, and still in middle life!

We have had some frightful robberies, one in a clergyman's house attended with murder. The place (which I happen to know) is wild and desolate, just a fit scene for such a tragedy. All luck to your sport—which means little more than skill—and happiness, and health to you personally.

Thank God I am in very good plight, but rather dreading the long damp winter which seems already to have begun. The builder said he wondered that this house had not been the death of us all, especially the pony.

November, 1850.

I was just about to write to you to tell you of the sincere sorrow with which I heard of your trying illness, when this packet made its appearance (November 18, 1850), and I do not lose a moment in acknowledging its receipt. I have been delighted to hear of your recovery, and I am charmed with this first chapter. There is one thing which is the result of your living abroad and thinking in a foreign idiom—the use of "one" and "you"—(you know what I mean in the sense

[1] Balzac died at Paris, August 18, 1850.

of the French "on"). We in England use "one" in that sense in conversation, but not often otherwise. Here, you begin the book with it, and carry it through the first page, if not through two pages. Of course the sooner we get to the mountains the better—the chamois being the real subject of the book. But that play[1] must have been a curious thing, chiefly curious as showing how much ignorance and barbarism still exist among nations called civilized. I shall take all care of this MS. and hold it at your disposal. Is it *your* prince who is leading the Bavarian army in Hesse under the title of the Prince of Thurn und Taxis? The general feeling about these German quarrels here is that the whole nation is crazy; going to fight about nothing; the king of Prussia being rather the worst used of all. However, we have no cause to talk about the follies of our neighbours, God knows, for all England is in one blaze of bigoted Protestantism, not at all unlikely to burn all the Catholics by way of vindicating liberty of conscience. To be sure the Pope has acted like an idiot in sending a Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and a whole popish hierarchy amongst our No-popery population. But still I had hoped that in the middle of the nineteenth century we were above and beyond these furious religious cries, and I really had expected better things of Lord John than that he should write a furious

[1] The Oberammergau Passion Play.

letter in vindication of the Queen's supremacy. For my part, I hate priestcraft. Christianity, as we find it in the New Testament, is a very different matter, far more charitable and more practical, and by and by posterity will probably stick to the essence and reject much of the outward form.

The only person who really keeps one's enthusiasm alive just now is Louis Napoleon. That message of his is beautiful; so were many of his addresses during his different journeys, and the manner in which he speaks of himself (so difficult a test) is always charming from its modesty, its delicacy, and its truth. There is about all he says a calm dignity that contrasts strongly with the usual tone of French exaggeration. He is too good for them, and I dare say will have to return to England poor and exiled, but leaving behind him a name not unworthy of the nephew of Napoleon.

Henry Phillips[1] was here last Thursday with what he calls a musical poem founded on "Our Village." It has little of mine in it, but is very beautiful musically.

All you tell me of Mr. Constable is most interesting. I am myself most unwilling to set to writing.

[1] Henry Phillips (1801–76), a musician of note in his day.

1851

Miss Mitford continues her candid and undoubtedly helpful criticism of Boner's manuscript. She makes observations on some of the events of the year, and on most of the books she reads. She praises Cardinal Wiseman's prose, and puts Oliver Wendell Holmes as a poet above Whittier and Longfellow. She finds the "Prelude" prosy, and declares that Wordsworth and Andersen will be speedily forgotten. She admires portions of Mrs. Browning's "Casa Guidi Windows," but deprecates the mixture of politics and poetry, and thinks that Mrs. Browning will certainly be expelled from Italy for such utterances.

Although in June Miss Mitford assured her friend Mrs. Jennings that it was impossible for her to stand the pleasant fatigue of London—"I am so lame that I could no more walk over the Exhibition than I could

fly"—in August she went to London for a week to see Mrs. Browning and the Great Exhibition. She stayed near Mrs. Browning, of whom she saw a great deal. She visited the Exhibition under the guidance of Lucas, the painter. While she admired the vastness, lightness, and exquisite fitness of the building, she did not think very highly of the exhibits, although she characterized the Indian tissues as "poems."

But the great event of this year was the removal from Three Mile Cross, where she had dwelt since 1820, to Swallowfield. The landlord refusing to do anything to the cottage at Three Mile Cross, Miss Mitford had perforce to seek a fresh abode. "If we had stayed much longer," she wrote, "we should have been buried in the ruins." She found what she needed, not far off, in the village of Swallowfield, and accomplished the move in the third week of September. She naturally felt sorry at leaving the old home.

There I had toiled and striven, and tasted as deeply of bitter anxiety, of fear, and of hope, as often falls to the lot of woman. There, in the fulness of age, I had lost those whose love had

made my home sweet and precious. Alas! there is no hearth so humble but it has known such tales of joy and of sorrow! Friends, many and kind, had come to that bright garden, and that garden room. The list would fill more pages than I have to give. There Mr. Justice Talfourd had brought the delightful gaiety of his brilliant youth, and poor Haydon had talked more vivid pictures than he ever painted. The illustrious of the last century—Mrs. Opie, Jane Porter, Mr. Cary—had mingled there with poets still in their earliest dawn. It was a heart-tug to leave that garden. . . .

I walked from the one cottage to the other on an autumn evening, when the vagrant birds, whose habit of assembling here for their annual departure gives, I suppose, its name of Swallowfield to the village, were circling and twittering over my head; and repeated to myself the pathetic lines of Hayley as he saw these same birds gathering upon his roof during his last illness:

> Ye gentle birds, that perch aloof,
> And smooth your pinions on my roof,
> Preparing for departure hence
> Ere winter's angry threats commence;
> Like you, my soul would smooth her plume
> For longer flights beyond the tomb.
>
> May God, by Whom is seen and heard
> Departing man and wandering bird,
> In mercy mark us for His own,
> And guide us to the land unknown.

Thoughts soothing and tender came with those touching lines, and gayer images followed. Here I am in this prettiest village, in the cosiest and snuggest of all cabins; a trim cottage garden, divided by a hawthorn hedge from a little field guarded by grand old trees; a cheerful glimpse of the highroad in front, just to hint that there is such a thing as the peopled world; and on either side the deep, silent, woody lanes that form the distinctive character of English scenery.[1]

The cottage was not too far from her favourite walks and most valued neighbours.

February 11, 1851.

I don't quite like the new chapter so well as the old ones, dear friend, and I will tell you why.[2] The new chapter is one that talks about nothing. Now to do that requires exquisite charm and point, and taste, and grace, and above all a perfect command of *idiom*, which no one can retain who does not habitually speak English, read English, and think in English; so that if this first chapter (by which so many people judge) could be shortened or filled with things, facts, instead of words, it would be better. I tell you the absolute truth for the good of the book.

[1] "Recollections of a Literary Life," iii, p. 292.

[2] Miss Mitford is again referring to Boner's "Chamois Hunting."

The first chapter *will do*, but it will not prepossess as it should do. I know you will pardon me for saying this. It seems to me worth while to take great pains with this book, because the whole of the chamois shooting part is far better than anything you have ever done, and likely to make you a name which will be useful in every way; so that it is the duty of a fastidious friend, "who is nothing if not critical," to give you the full benefit of her fastidiousness. There are such millions of books now-a-days that it is most difficult to win a name, and it can only be done by seizing happy subjects, and treating them in the most efficient way. Above all, mere wordiness must be avoided; very few people indeed have the art of commanding attention by the mere play of words, the very trick of style—a doubtful merit at the best, but a thing in which failure is more than commonly bad. Get as much stuff as you can, real facts for the book, and think rather of making it shorter than making it longer, and the work can hardly fail of making its way.

Your letter gave me great pleasure. The attack on Wiseman has brought him out in full force. Have you read his Appeal? If not, do. I mean of course in English, for eloquence is well-nigh as untranslatable as poetry, and also read his "Lectures on the Hierarchy." There are passages in both as fine as anything in English prose. I saw a friend of his the other day who says that

every post brings to the Cardinal the most frightful threatening letters, and only in yesterday's "Times" I saw an account of a mob that paraded Golden Square, where he lives, with a mock Pope, and so forth. On the whole, however, I think the agitation will do good. It will bring into perfect view the bigotries of our so-called religionists of every sect and of every party, and it has already called out a large number of persons opposing these bigotries.

Mr. Roebuck has written one of his capital, scornful letters. Half the influential weekly journals are printing excellent common sense. The actual people—those who attend Mechanics' Institutes, and have begun to take so high a standing in our country—laugh the thing to scorn. The "Times" of course took it up like the Minister, as a claptrap, but I believe Lord John repents, and we all know that a turn the more costs little to "the leading journal of Europe." When I go to London I mean to hear the Cardinal. He is only forty-nine: young to have attained so high a position; a large man with a comparatively weak voice, so that the delivery is not equal to the writing. If it were, it would be perfection. There is no living man who approaches him in English prose. I prefer him to Burke.

I have been writing little lately, having been unusually unwell this wet, dreary, dirty winter—the sort of low fever that belongs to influenza, pro-

ceeding partly from the weather, and still more from the incurable dampness of this old cottage. I do now hope to get the one at Swallowfield but dare not venture to expect it until all is settled; certainly I cannot spend another winter here. I have been reading a great deal. Wordsworth's long prosy poem [1]—which I suspect nobody will fairly get through, so interminable is it and so level; Southey's thousand and one posthumous works, Life and Letters and Common-place Books, and all the poems; about thirty volumes I have been reading of Southey, prose and verse, and could read thirty more. The volumes of the "Romance of the Peerage," most interesting; Leigh Hunt's Autobiography, likeable with all its faults; Lamartine's "Geneviève"; "Alton Locke," a very curious bit of Church of England socialism, by a neighbour of mine, Mr. Kingsley; and three striking American books—"The Scarlet Letter," a wild romantic tale of the elder days of Boston; "Songs of Labour"; "Poems," by John Whittier; and a most striking little book called "Astræa," by Oliver Holmes, a poem recited before a society at Yale College and printed by them. We have had nothing like it for years. It is a combination of Goldsmith, Pope, and Dryden, but thoroughly native and original, full of strength and beauty, of pathos and power, with a graphic force of diction, a harmony of versification, and a general

[1] "The Prelude," published 1850.

finish that we look for in vain on this side of the water. What a model for our young poets!

I fully believe what you tell me of German politics. All seems hollow. France will, I hope, cleave to Louis Napoleon. The National Assembly, with its old worn-out party leaders, cuts a deplorable figure. The English Press is almost universally in his favour; all that he says bears upon it an impress of truth, and thought, and personal character of high stamp. I know no one who has so much profited by his own misfortunes and mistakes. If God grant me life and health, I hope to finish two or three volumes of "Readings" against next autumn, and bring them out in a separate form.[1] I heard an account of Miss Bremer[2] the other day—a little old woman, with milk-white hair, older, I suppose, than I am.

I have never heard a word of Haydon's book or of his son.

February 28, 1851.

Before talking of anything else, let me say that the apparent change of my opinion arose partly from a re-perusal of the chapter in question, partly from the sincere conviction I entertained that it is the duty of a friend when appealed to on a question of criticism to tell the absolute truth, how-

[1] "Recollections of a Literary Life." See p. 199 *et seq.*

[2] Frederika Bremer (1801–65), the Swedish novelist.

ever painful to both parties, partly from the very high hopes that I have from the first cherished with regard to that book, which ought to make a name and will do so if care be taken to weed from it all that is not really good. Now I am even more impressed with the sense of the necessity of your abstaining from all mere wordiness—verbiage, freaks of words—from the very interesting bit of "Chambers's Journal" that you have sent me—the immense difference between the introductory part of the writing and the description of the speeches that comes after. The one is absolutely bad, the other positively good. I see perfectly the cause of this. You have lost the *command* of the English language and idiom. How should you have retained it, living as you have done for eight years entirely apart from English people; reading, writing, talking, and thinking in German? Some authors (Mr. Lever, for instance) live abroad with impunity, but then they are surrounded with English people, their own families, and their principal associates being English or American. There is the difference.

Did you ever see a good bowler in the intervals of a game of cricket tossing the ball about here and there, now low upon the ground, now high among the trees, always, amidst his seeming carelessness, hitting exactly the very point at which he aimed? And did you doubt for a moment that it was the practised eye and the practised hand which pro-

duced that constant truth of aim?[1] Now this is what you have for the present lost, and therefore you must abstain from these verbal sports and say only what you have to say as simply as possible. When full of matter, when the reader's attention is directed to facts and narratives, the want of this power to gambol and curvet is not felt. I am not very sure that the use of such a power is ever very wise, even in those who possess it in the highest perfection, but mere writing when not of undeniable gracefulness—in short, *failure* in such an attempt is of all things the most dangerous, and would tend to diminish the merits of the better parts more than I like to think or to say. Observe that in these, perhaps uncivil truths, I in nothing detract from the real talent or charm of the book. I am only most desirous that the high qualities it evinces should not be thrown away.

You ought to make that book your literary stake, and write and re-write until you have done the very best you can do; because, dear friend, all that you say about not being able to correct is mere laziness. What would you say to one of your pupils who should make the same excuse? Even to this hour I write and re-write and write again, and am *then* dissatisfied, and if I were not it would

[1] Miss Mitford was a great lover of cricket. Her essay on "A Country Cricket Match" in "Our Village" reveals her knowledge of and interest in the game.

be a sign to myself that I was becoming like the Archbishop to Gil Blas, and must leave off.

Thank you very much for the bit of Chambers. Cobden is exactly true, only that in society he is more refined. What you tell me of Girardin is very interesting. Is he an illegitimate son of Napoleon? He is spoilt by the instability and trickery of the French character, from which Louis Napoleon is so free, and also, I suppose, by the vanity. Did you ever read a very curious and remarkable play of his wife's, taken partly from one of Balzac's best novels, and partly from a story respecting that detestable "little piece of mischief" Thiers, partly from the sad end of Baron Gros, the painter? It is called "L'École des Journalistes."[1] She read it herself to all the most remarkable journalists and authors of Paris, and I read it in a Bruxelles edition with several feuilletons about it appended thereunto, especially a letter to the authoress by Jules Janin,[2] one of his best, in which he calls her his "beau confrère." Do read it. The comedy itself is very clever, as if inspired by the great novel, "Un grand Homme de Province à Paris," which suggested it to her fancy.

By the way, it is all the nothings which in Jules Janin are so charming that you must resolutely

[1] The play was produced in 1840. Mme. de Girardin's best-known play is the little one-act drama entitled "La joie fait peur" (1854).

[2] Critic and novelist (1804–74).

abstain from imitating at present. Content yourself with better things. This new chapter leading to no result seems to me rather *long*. Can't you make an adventure or two? Artistic truth and literal truth are very different. As an instance of your foreign idiom take "but the brightness lasts not long," which is not bad English, but yet is certainly not such as you would have written if you had never left your own country. It is these intangible niceties occurring in every page that make me urge upon you the putting in more matter; so that the reader may never have to think of the expression.

Do you know Cardinal Wiseman? It was a whole party of Catholics, his friends and admirers, who, in answer to my questions about his delivery, made the remark as to the weakness of his voice, "a small voice from a large person," always a disappointing thing, but both they and I were thinking of public speaking, which is, you know, very different from talking in a room. Of course you read his Appeal.[1] I think that, especially the latter part about the title of Westminster, one of the finest pieces of prose in the language. He is a most accomplished man of letters, and that Appeal fairly dumbfounded the "Times" for a week. We are all to pieces as to a Ministry, and it is said that the Prince and the Queen are now so much afraid of the result of that folly the Grand

[1] "Appeal to the Reason and Good Feeling of the English People on the Subject of the Catholic Hierarchy," 1850.

Exhibition, that they will only go up to town for state balls and levees and drawing-rooms, and continue to reside at Windsor. Already the park is a scene of tremendous disorder. Think what it will be when all the mob of foreigners and of our own artisans shall be added to the rogues and pickpockets of London! Besides which, after having built the trees in they will infallibly be cut down, and I believe everybody is agreed in wishing that it could have been all swept away and things replaced as they were.

You will be more interested to hear that I have at length all but a certainty of the Swallowfield cottage. It will be a great expense, but I do not wish to quit the neighbourhood, and here I cannot stay; as, although rather better, my health has suffered much this winter.

You will delight in Dr. Holmes, for a doctor he is, being, although still quite a young man, one of the most eminent physicians in Boston. If you see the "Lady's Companion" you will find two extracts from his works in the next number of the most extraordinary point and beauty.[1] We have nothing that approaches him for the polish and felicity of his diction. He is quite as remarkable for largeness and justness of thought. Mr. Fields tells me that he sings his own gay and brilliant songs most exquisitely, and speaks as finely as he writes; and is altogether so charming a person that people are

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," iii, p. 21.

ill on purpose to be attended by him. He sent me his own poems himself the other day, and his handwriting is most clear and beautiful, and his face such as could belong to nobody else, with lofty thoughts on the brow and a sparkle of humour in the eye. Depend upon it, neither Longfellow nor Whittier are to be compared with him. I have written to him just as I think, and we shall probably be friends.

The "Lady's Companion" is now printed monthly — a great improvement. Except the article on Dr. Holmes, I have not been well enough to write anything *new* for it since the autumn, but hope to give a long article on Chatterton [1] shortly. They have continued to give my articles, but they have been those I wrote last summer. I still expect to bring out my own book in the autumn, and I hope you will like it.

At my new home I shall be within half a mile of Sir Henry Russell's park and family, a great acquisition, for they are accomplished people, and he has a fine library, buys the best foreign books, and lends me any I want. It is the house where Lord Clarendon wrote his history. I have not heard of Andersen's book. He had a momentary reputation in England, but it is quite past and gone. We are an ungrateful people, and knock down our idols to avenge our own idolatry. You'll see that will be the case with Wordsworth,

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," iii, p. 1.

who, first underrated then overrated, will fall again below his proper level, ay, and very soon. The posthumous articles upon him would have driven him crazy, poor man. By the way, there is a flaming review of Lord Holland's book [1] in the last "Edinburgh" (by Lord Monteagle). I have been reading the book itself, which, although it interested me on account of Napoleon, is certainly very inferior to the Lope de Vega book and the opportunities of the author. Have you read "Alton Locke"? I am now reading a fine American work just sent me.

The "Scarlet Letter" is not to be had in England. You ought to have seen it here. It is a wild tale of the Pilgrim Fathers, very striking and poetical. The author (Mr. Hawthorne) is now busy at another tale.

April 17, 1851.

You are the most docile receiver of a criticism in the world; too much so, perhaps, for you make me now doubt myself. I mean that you make me think it quite possible I have been rather nervous and anxious in performing an unpleasant office of friendship, and may have forgotten (in the case of the last chapter especially) that reading in MS., and in small portions, is really an unfair way of judging of a book that should be got through at

[1] Cf. "Foreign Reminiscences," 1850.

a sitting. As a general rule I can safely say put as much matter into the volume as possible.

I am sure of your liking Dr. Holmes. The manliness, the cheerfulness, the healthy searching spirit, the constant candour, the large charity, the total absence of cant, joined to a power of painting in words nothing short of miraculous. I will give you one little specimen. He is describing the bursting forth of an American spring and the spring flowers :

> The spendthrift crocus bursting through the mould,
> Naked and shivering with his cup of gold.

There are hundreds of such lines, and the tone is so scholarly, so masterly. God grant that it make a complete change in our vile school of obscurity, crudeness, and self-conceit. Dr. Holmes is still a young man, but already one of the most eminent physicians of Boston, and the very idol of the place, being a most accomplished person, master of half-a-dozen languages, a charming singer of his own charming songs, and speaking even better than he writes. It is quite a treasure-trove.

Mr. Fields sent me the "Astræa" with a large packet of books. I wrote at once my delight in that little volume, and I suppose my letter found its way to Dr. Holmes, for by return of packet came his collected poems, with "For Miss Mitford,

with Dr. Holmes' best respects," on the flyleaf. His portrait is there too, with a facsimile of his writing; the countenance is fine and characteristic —a grand, thoughtful head, with a sparkle of humour in the eye. I have written him a long letter, and feel that we shall be friends. I don't think that he has been in England—his medical studies were completed at Paris. But all his works are delightfully national, without any of the national foibles.

What you say of Cobden is very true indeed. I wish he had refrained from those foolish peace meetings, for I can't help thinking they have kept him out of power in this crisis. No doubt you are right about Lord Palmerston. I know that to many eminent artists he has been exceedingly insolent, which is more the way of a little man than a great one. I hope the Peel party may come in with some of the Liberals. Sir William Molesworth, for instance, and Mr. Grote: to get rid of the Greys, Elliotts, and Russells seems to be everybody's wish.

I have some Catholic friends who know Cardinal Wiseman well, and speak of his goodness as equal to his talents. Certainly his Appeal was a thing to revel in. But I had always a weakness for the ancient church with its art and its poetry, as compared with our establishment, which, discarding all its beauty, retained only the bigotry and the intolerance.

I wish you had heard Victor Hugo as well as Girardin. I am just reading for the second time his Dramas and his "Poésies," and certainly, allowing for some excess, some extravagance, he is a great dramatist. "Le Roi s'amuse" is a great play; so is "Lucrèce Borgia," so is "Marion Delorme." I wish you had heard him, although I believe he only reads his speeches, which we English are hardly contented with, and owing to that cause, or some fault in the delivery, they are called weak. I suppose people expect something as exciting as his tragedies.

I have been looking at a curious volume by Miss Martineau and a Mr. Atkinson,[1] which professes to be a genuine correspondence, and is preceded by four pages of mottoes, chiefly from Lord Bacon, whose experimental philosophy hardly answers for mathematics. She has taken one from her and my friend Archbishop Whately, which, considering that the book is called atheistical, will hardly enchant his grace. For my part I should not have called it by so hard a name. I should rather have doubted whether either the lady or gentleman quite knows the exact thing that the letters do mean. I am sure I do not, and I suspect that many other of their readers will be in the same predicament. A very different book which John Ruskin has just sent me is his

[1] "Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development," by H. G. Atkinson and H. Martineau, 1851.

"Stones of Venice," most beautiful as to writing and as to decoration. It will make a great hit.

I have finally taken the Swallowfield cottage, and shall move in the autumn, before which time I hope to finish my readings, which have been delayed all the winter by my being really too poorly to write.

July 20, 1851.

I do not know whether, when I last wrote, I was as dismally lame as I am now, or rather, whether the lameness had lasted so long as to become a settled infirmity. I rather crawl than walk, and am put down in the green lane at three or four o'clock with my little maid and my little dog and my camp stool, and fetched again at seven or eight o'clock, that I may have the air without fatigue.

Partly this lameness, partly the absence of curiosity, have kept me in the country. Chairs are only admitted for an hour or two to the Great Exhibition early on the Saturday morning, and as Mrs. Browning has advanced as far as Paris towards London, I wait to know whether she really does mean to come to England this year before making up my mind to take the journey without the chance of seeing her. Unless she comes, I don't think I shall get to London. I dread the fatigue, and the crowd, and the excitement, and have really less desire to go than can well be conceived. I never was a sight-seer, and the more one questions people

about this the less one finds oneself attracted. Sam, whom I sent, says that one-third of the stalls consists of stockings and calico, and things as common as that, and it is wonderful how people are cooling towards it. We always were a nation of idolaters: always avenging ourselves upon our poor idols for our own idolatry. We make gods of wood and stone, and then we knock them to pieces, as many a poet, first overrated then underrated can testify, and so we shall do by this, although to do the most sensible people whom I know justice, they have always laughed at the fashionable madness. Taken at the very best it is furniture, not art, and if it come to be a winter garden, will probably look better when clothed with gorgeous creepers and filled with fountains, and statues, and flowering shrubs than it does now.[1]

Mrs. Browning sent me her book.[2] It is a dull tirade on Italian politics. When I say dull and yet vigorously written, that sounds like a contradiction, but it is not so. The subject, which is not largely though forcibly treated, is so unreal that it excites no sympathy, for it seems to me out of the question that a people without recent poetry, without living literature, without even an attempt at eloquence—whose last great writer was Alfieri, whose sculpture

[1] A prophetic vision of the Crystal Palace, Sydenham. The first column of the re-erection of the building was raised August 5, 1851.

[2] "Casa Guidi Windows," 1851.

has dwindled into wood-carving, whose pictorial art into mosaic copies, who have not even produced one man of mark in this general tossing up of nations, should be ripe for freedom and self-government. Year by year they seem to be dwindling. Even music, which held by them longest, is now dying away. They have still singers, but they have no composers. Italy is an extinct volcano. The very smoke is gone, and it seems to be wrong as well as foolish to try to provoke a struggle, which can only end in the reaction always so fatal to progress and rational liberty. Don't you agree with me? There are one or two tolerable passages, but the metre is harsh and unattractive, and the triple rhyme of Dante quite unsuited to English verse; and the only result of the book will be a bill at Chapman and Hall's, and a total exclusion from Italy for the writer in case she wants to return thither.[1] It will make no hit here.

The "Stones of Venice" has a great success. The illustrations by the author are exquisite, and the writing, as always, is good, with his characteristic faults, which people almost accept for beauties. Hawthorne's "House with the Seven Gables" is even finer in the same way than "The Scarlet Letter"—the legendary part dim, shadowy, and impressive, and the living characters exquisitely true, vivid, and healthful. The heroine, Phœbe, is almost a Shakesperian creation, as fresh and charm-

[1] Miss Mitford was here entirely mistaken.

ing as the Rigolette of Eugène Sue. You and the Princess are very good in liking my poor articles; and as to the "Lady's Companion," your knowledge of it is later than mine. I think the last proof I corrected was one of Fishing Songs.[1]

SWALLOWFIELD, NEAR READING,[2]
September 27, 1851.

You see by the date that the great tearing up by the roots has at last been effected. We moved last Tuesday, a terrible job. There were four tons of books!!! and I had nearly died the first night, for K., in order to ensure my bedroom being washed all over every month, had had every bit of it, ceiling, walls, and all, painted with four coats of paint, and the shutters being hermetically sealed against a breath of air, and the night exceedingly sultry, I was so much affected, that every door and window in the house were obliged to be flung open, and although I have never entered that room since, I have hardly recovered the intolerable smell of the paint. In other respects I like the place. It is exceedingly convenient, the neighbours, high and low, are delighted to get us, and the drives and walks are charming. Indeed, in quiet pastoral beauty it is impossible to exceed this lovely valley of the Loddon, with its green water-meadows and its magnificent trees, quite different from the country

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," ii, p. 264.
[2] The remaining letters are all addressed from Swallowfield.

MISS MITFORD'S COTTAGE AT SWALLOWFIELD.

To face p. 190.

nearer Reading—more like a chase or a gentleman's park. About half-a-mile off is the fine house built by the second Lord Clarendon.

But the great things in this place are the dryness and firmness of the house, and the abundance of water; for at the Cross we have not had a drop, except what we brought from hence, for the last six weeks. Here we have a pump, two springs, a great ford and the river. I think you will like it, although I have no sitting-room so pretty as that at the old house.

Just after I wrote to you Mrs. Browning arrived in town, and I went there for a week to meet her. A strange thing it seemed to see her walking about like other people. She and her husband are now gone to winter in Paris. I talk of meeting them there in the spring. They have a pretty little boy, but it was odd to hear the English parents and the English nurse talking to him in Italian. I suppose next year they will all talk to him in French, and when English will take its turn, God knows. In their way to England they stopped at Paris, and in the Louvre they thought they saw Alfred Tennyson; looking at the book they found his name written "A. Tennyson, Rentier." (Is not that curious?) So then they met and offered each other their houses, he having a cottage at Twickenham, and they not having given up their apartment at the Casa Guidi. By the way, I don't think they can return to Florence with that book, the "Casa

Guidi Windows," against them. When I was in London I heard from three quarters that Mazzini wants to have it translated as a political pamphlet.

Mr. Lucas was so good as to make a day to take me to the Great Exhibition, which is just like a great bazaar, and neither deserves the praise some people give it nor the blame of others. The glass house is light and tasteful. The Duke of Devonshire said to me a dozen years ago, " Paxton could make half a leaf grow," and he seems to be one of those who succeed in whatever they undertake. The British Gallery this year, filled with the very finest old pictures in England, seemed to me better worth seeing than that exhibition.

John Ruskin (the most fashionable of all our authors just now) told me that he thought he should give up art and take to natural science. One capital article in my book will be Daniel Webster's speeches, which nobody knows.[1] I have just got from America a new edition of two volumes of tales (" Twice-told Tales ") by Nathaniel Hawthorne, with a most characteristic portrait and preface. The tales are very inferior to the fine works you have got. I saw a great deal of the Goldsmids when in London, and hope to go to Summerhill, near Tunbridge Wells, the fine old house which Queen Elizabeth gave to Lord Leicester, and where Charles the Second passed so much time, and which Sir Isaac bought a year or two ago, just as

[1] Cf. " Recollections of a Literary Life," ii, p. 41.

it stood, books, pictures, and all. I went the other day to Donnington, and over all the fields of the two battles of Newbury, and am certainly better of my lameness though still very lame. Do you know a charming Baroness de Klenze at Munich? She was a Miss Farmer, and is a sweet creature still, although the mother of many children.

November 27, 1851.

Yes, I received your kind letter, and I ought to have thanked you for the details respecting Wildbad, but I suppose that my own moving and my own book jolted everything out of my head. It has been an autumn of singular commotion. The getting this place (which had stood vacant nearly two years whilst lawyers were disputing about the property) into habitable order—the making my old furniture serve, which necessitated a great deal of cutting out and cutting down—the making carpets, the only things I was compelled to purchase, the packing and unpacking my army of books (not all arranged yet), the fixing shelves to hold them: then my book which I own I hope to finish this week—all these things have wearied me exceedingly; however, I am better to-day and yesterday, and hope when once my book is fairly out of hand I shall improve.

I continue delighted with the situation, which is dry, cheerful, and full of beauty. The valley of the Loddon, along which the lanes extend to the back

lodge of the Duke's Park, is more exquisitely rich, and soft, and pastoral, with its lovely water-meadows, its bright winding stream, and its magnificent timber, than anything you can imagine. There are bits in it worthy the pencil of Constable, and it is just the scenery in which he delighted. You must show your proficiency in the business by sketching it when you come to England next.

Then I have had abundance of visitors, some old and valued friends, Dean Milman and his lady (the poet, now Dean of St. Paul's), my friend Mr. Fields, the young American. Did I tell you that he had lost his lovely young wife in her bridal year, and was sent to Europe for change of scene? Seeing him was most pleasant to me. He told me a thousand interesting things; none more so than the account he gives of Hawthorne. He was in extreme penury. My friend Mr. Fields heard of it, went to him, and told him that such was his confidence in his powers that he would print 2,500 copies of any work he might give him, and allow him 25 per cent. profit.

"I have a chapter or two," replied the author, "of a little story that I mean to form part of a volume of tales; but what will your partners say?"

"Never mind my partners," said Mr. Fields, "I'll do it on my own responsibility: only show me this beginning." It was the "Scarlet Letter."

"You must make an entire volume of this," said

my friend, and Mr. Hawthorne took his advice. The success is greater than ever has been known both in England and America, and "The House with the Seven Gables" is an equal hit. He is now busy in books for children, and one for grown people also—rich and happy. The remarkable thing is that he is as modest as a young girl, and thinks himself the most overrated man in all America. He is a splendid man personally, of the height and build of Daniel Webster, with a noble head—a magnificent creature, mind and body.

I had the great pleasure of being the first person to convey to Mr. Ticknor (cousin of Mr. Fields' partner and also a dear friend of mine) the first news of Mr. Macaulay's having selected his book on Spanish literature, when entreated by the Queen to recommend one to her, as the best that had appeared for many years.

Then I have had Mr. Bennoch, a common councilman of London, who the day before had received and introduced Kossuth at the Guildhall. Kossuth told him that years ago he taught himself English in an Austrian prison with only three books—Shakespeare, the Bible, and a Hungarian dictionary. His speaking is said to be something wonderful for raciness and diction; that when he comes to a pause he coins some word that will become English from its felicity, so that people listen without perceiving the length of his harangues. I take leave to think him a humbug who says one thing one day and

another the next in order to please his audience, and who came here for two motives, to excite so much enthusiasm as might provide a Kossuth fund, and to stir up the people to go to war that he might take his chance to gain something in the scramble. He has succeeded in attracting an immense number of followers, but I doubt his getting the money, and am pretty sure that he will fail in the war speculation.

Mr. Fields says that in America such is the appetite for novelty and charlatanism, that he should not wonder if they found out that he was born in the States, and made him President. Only he'll get no money there. Tell me, you who are nearer, what you think of this adventurer? I have a great hatred to the people who for interested motives profane the great name of freedom. Besides, I have not forgiven his abuse of Louis Napoleon in that inflammatory letter of his at Marseilles. What do you think of *him* at this moment? Mrs. Browning, who is in Paris, says that he is fully expected to be re-elected. She saw him alight from his carriage in the court-yard of an hotel the other day, and he got out laughing and with some difficulty, for it was filled up to his waist with nosegays and petitions flung in through the open windows. She tells me that George Sand is living at her château in Berry; the house full of her own friends and her son's, who rehearse her new dramas before they are offered to the theatres. I

cried my eyes out over Claudie. Certainly she has conquered a new kingdom. Her son is a commonplace young man of three-and-twenty, but fond of his mother.

I hear that the Brownings have had a grand success at Paris. I have only messages backward and forward from Alfred Tennyson; we have never met. I don't believe he talks well, but he is kindly and amiable—only that smoking! Neither does Mr. Kingsley talk well; between his stammering and his discursiveness there is no getting on with him: we have not met yet, but I hear this on all hands. Miss Bremer was at his house lately for a few hours, and if she could have staid half a day longer we should have met at a mutual friend's; as it was, nothing passed but mutual lamentations. People speak well of her, as unaffected and pleasing.

I have just been reading "Le Collier de la Reine," by Dumas, which has much interest, as those historical mysteries always have. Tell me about your book.

I am expecting every day a visit from one of the most remarkable old ladies in England, Lady Stanley of Alderley.[1] She was the daughter of that Lord Sheffield who edited Gibbon's works and wrote his Life, and in that correspondence is a

[1] She was born in 1771, married Lord Stanley of Alderley in 1796, and died in 1863. She was now eighty.

remarkable letter of hers, sixty years ago or more. She trots about the house now, like her contemporary Mrs. Hughes, from six in the morning till eleven at night, and is just as young in mind as in body. She calls herself my neighbour at thirteen miles off, and at this time of year!

1852

The letters grow fewer. Miss Mitford was becoming almost crippled with rheumatism. She continued, however, to take a keen interest in certain sides of public affairs, and retained her admiration for Louis Napoleon through all the vicissitudes of the time and was equally depreciatory of Kossuth and doubtful of his sincerity.

Miss Mitford was delighted at the success of her new book, "Recollections of a Literary Life." She was overwhelmed with letters in its praise from enthusiastic girls, young poets, grave old merchants, self-educated men, professional men "who find relief from their mind-weariness in the soothing delights of poetry." The book is full of literary and personal interest and deals with more than seventy authors. From the reminiscences scattered through the book it would be easy to construct a

delightful piece of autobiography, full of humorous and pathetic touches. The book is also a testimony to Miss Mitford's taste in literature and to her wide reading in what in 1852 were out-of-the-way works. Such authors as Ben Jonson, Cowley, Beaumont and Fletcher, Sir Philip Sidney, Izaak Walton, Colley Cibber, W. S. Landor, Chatterton, Marvell, Clarendon were then little read except by students, and Miss Mitford chooses specimens of their poetry or prose that are now in every school anthology.

A curious episode in connection with the book which was the cause of grief to Mrs. Browning and to which she refers in her letters is worth recounting here.

A chapter in the first volume, headed "Married Poets," dealt with Elizabeth and Robert Browning. There Miss Mitford told the story of the drowning of Edward Barrett, Elizabeth Barrett's brother, at Torquay in 1840.[1] It fills barely two pages of

[1] He had accompanied his sister to Torquay, where the doctors had sent her for her health, and was drowned while boating in Babbicombe Bay. The tragedy overshadowed her life for a long period of years.

the twenty-five composing the chapter, and is related with delicacy and restraint. Miss Mitford introduces the personal details in connection with Mrs. Browning by stating that she is too dear to her as a friend to be spoken of merely as a poetess, and that her poems have won for her the love of so many persons she has never met, "that it will gratify them without, I trust, infringing on the sacredness of private intercourse, to speak of her not wholly as a poetess, but a little as a woman." She continues:

"I have so often been asked what could be the shadow that had passed over that young heart, that now that time has softened the first agony it seems to me right that the world should hear the story of an accident in which there was much sorrow but no blame."

Mrs. Browning was living at Paris at the time the book came out, and a friend who was present at the first of a course of lectures on English Literature delivered by Philarète Chasles, reported to her that he announced a future lecture on Elizabeth

Barrett Browning, "the veil from whose private life had lately been raised by Miss Mitford." Then another friend told the Brownings that the passage in question was quoted in the "Athenæum" review of the book. Mrs. Browning, terribly upset by the idea of a publicity her sensitive soul abhorred, could not bear to read the notice herself, but asked her husband to read it out to her. This he did with omissions, at the same time assuring her that, for the facts to be given at all, they could not possibly have been set forth with greater delicacy. Mrs. Browning's first feeling was vexation that she could not be angry with Miss Mitford; she could not help recognizing the affectionate intentions, while deploring the obtuseness of understanding. At length she wrote to Miss Mitford, describing the wretchedness the revelation had caused her. "It will prove how hard it is for the tenderest friends to help paining one another, since you have pained me." Miss Mitford replied that she would rather the whole book had perished than

that it should have given her friend a moment's pain. Whereupon Mrs. Browning acknowledged that her sensitiveness on those matters amounted almost to disease, and was doubtless very hard for others to comprehend.

The painting of her portrait by Lucas this year was also a great pleasure to Miss Mitford. In a letter to the Rev. Hugh Pearson (April 30, 1852) she wrote: "It is the expression that is so wonderful-looking, not perhaps as I ever do look, but as by some remote possibility I might be dreamt to look."

January 21, 1852.

I have escaped, through urgent business, seeing Edward Lytton's play. Dickens and his troop came to Reading to act it on that very night, and civilly reserved me a ticket and a seat till the last; but I had not completed my labour till half-past seven o'clock, when I was forced to send in to Reading to save the post, and was far too much exhausted to think of play-going. The miss of the dramatic affair was a great escape. Only fancy the thing lasting from eight o'clock till near two. My neighbours, the Russells, did not get

home with their blood horses until twenty minutes after two, and they are never forty minutes or thirty-five coming from Reading, being nearer than I am. I have always observed that amateurs of all kinds never weary of hearing themselves, but in this case the audience were tired to death; for, except Dickens in the farce, all was wretched.

Since then my kind neighbours have been in great trouble. You will, of course, have seen an account of the terrible loss of the new steamer, the *Amazon*, by fire.[1] One of the passengers aboard her was Eliot Warburton, author of "The Crescent and Cross."[2] If you know that charming book you will remember the part "R." plays in it; indeed his mind is reflected throughout the work, especially in the first volume. Well, this friend and fellow-traveller was young Henry Russell, Sir Henry's eldest son, one of those fine spirits who are pretty sure to pass away early. He is dead of consumption, and the loss of his favourite friend in this deplorable manner has renewed all their grief. They speak of Mr. Warburton as even more remarkable for temper, character, conduct, and conversation than for his high literary power. So generous, high-spirited,

[1] The West India mail steamship left Southampton on her first voyage, January 2, 1852, and was destroyed by fire about 110 miles W.S.W. of the Scilly Isles: 102 out of the 161 aboard perished.

[2] Published 1845.

and unselfish that he was sure to stay till all women and children and old men were saved, although no life could be more valuable than his own, for he had married a sweet woman of high family and small fortune, and had two young children entirely dependent on his exertions. What is worse, he was sent on a semi-official mission which he was certain to have executed so admirably as to ensure future employment. He may yet be saved, but there is little hope of it.

I continue delighted with my house, although the over-work of the correction of the press and this damp weather have tried me a good deal. At the other house I should have died of the two. They have taken down the outbuildings on either side, and you never saw anything so miserable as what is left. I think it will fall down altogether.

You are quite right about my neighbours. I am here among people of a high class, and they treat me as if I were a greater lady than themselves, respecting my ways and habits, and contriving in every way to make all pleasant to me.

Is not Louis Napoleon a fine fellow? I have no patience with our press for trying to drive our weak and ungracious ministry into measures that may force him into war—a war which every letter from France says would be so popular with army and people, and for which we are so entirely unprepared.

Mrs. Browning says that Paris was with him from the first to the last, so say three or four

other friends of mine, who have been there since the autumn. Mrs. Browning says that the courage and activity shown in the *coup d'état* have never been surpassed. She tells me some capital stories of Émile de Girardin, and says that the Prince says of himself that his life will have had four phases—one all rashness and imprudence, necessary to make his name known, and to make his own faults known to himself; the next the combat with and triumph over anarchy; the third the consolidation of France and pacification of Europe; the last *un coup de pistolet.* The passion of parties is so excited, that the only thing which renders the last improbable is the sort of fate by which men of that very high and calm courage often escape dangers by braving them.

Is not Kossuth an intolerable firebrand? I don't think his popularity will last long, either here or in America. A friend of mine writes me from London that his little boy (a child of eight years old), being at a twelfth-night party, drew the king. "Ah, le Roi!" cried the boy. "Je ne veux pas être Roi! Ils sont tous des Tyrans!" His parroting begins early.

Mrs. Browning says it is certain that Dumas' four hundred or five hundred volumes are all written by his own hand, like the Prince President's decrees. I always thought they were, by the odour of Dumas sprinkled over them. He is only helped by notes collected and reading done. He is said

to be a kind, good-natured, thoughtless person, a negro child—in debt at this moment; one who, if he wanted bread, would spend his last napoleon in buying a pretty cane instead of food.

I have just now a very fine racy poem by Longfellow, "The Golden Legend," breathing of Germany, and quaint old towers and grand cathedrals, and all the pageantry of the Middle Ages, full of local colour. I don't know that it will be popular, but in my mind it leaves all that he has done a million of miles behind. I know no living poet who could have written it. There is an out-of-door sermon which one can fancy preached at Paul's Cross before the Reformation.

Tell me what is thought of Louis Napoleon in Germany. Remember you owe me two letters now.

March 17, 1852.

My book[1] has been waiting I cannot tell how long for a safe conveyance to London. Week by week, almost day by day, I have been expecting that excellent and most trusty man of business, Mr. Bennett. He has already four children, and may have a dozen more. By the way, I have lost two dear friends lately in child-bed, one of them, Mrs. Praed (wife of a London banker, and sister-in-law of the poet), of her ninth, the other, a

[1] "Recollections of a Literary Life," 3 vols., published 1852.

Cameron of Lochiel, of her twenty-second child! the last expected to die. Mrs. Praed, a lovely woman of thirty-two, wrote to me in the highest spirits the day before her confinement. Mr. May says that the number of deaths in this way this winter exceeds any since the year the Princess Charlotte died, so that the medical men do not talk of the matter.

Poor Mrs. Eliot Warburton is in the family way. She clings to the hope that her husband is still alive; and his brothers, although confident there is no such chance, encourage the belief until after her confinement, so very terrible was the first effect of the news upon her. She was for some time quite frantic. A curious circumstance about the *Amazon* is the manner in which a dash of superstition saved the life of Lord Sheffield. He had paid for his passage, but forfeited it because the vessel sailed on a Friday.

I hope you will like my book. I never wrote any one that produced so many letters from friends and strangers. I think that I have not received less than fifteen to twenty a day, many of them from persons of the very highest accomplishment, several of whom will, I feel, be friends. It seems to please those best whom one most wishes to please, the true lovers of literature. But you must not expect a biography. It is rather a book of criticism mingled with a good deal of anecdote and little bits of personal gossip, which people like

chiefly, I think, on account of the style, and which you will like from old kindness. I have also quantities of books. One volume of poems, published under the name of Mary Maynard, is of singular beauty, and must make its way after the usual probation. By the way, she has sent me some MS. translations of your favourite poet, Uhland, which are exquisite. I never read translations so like originals in harmony and vigour. One, of the noble ballad of Taillefer, is especially fine. Between ourselves, Mary Maynard is not her name.[1] So far she has told me, although the true name I do not know. Her own family are ignorant of her having published, which has been done on the persuasion of our dear friend, John Ruskin, who is now at Venice, finishing his "Stones." I find by a letter from another friend (James Fields, the American now at Rome), that our laureate has left behind him some curious stories in Italy. He quitted Florence because he could not get any good tobacco!

Mrs. Browning has become acquainted with Madame Sand, and is charmed with her simplicity and nobleness; very quietly dressed, of the most unpretending manners, and not a cigarette to be

[1] She was a Miss Eliza Fall, a great friend of the Ruskins, near whom she lived at Herne Hill. Her brother Richard was a friend of John Ruskin when a young man. She wrote some poems that were published in a little volume for private circulation.

seen! While the English papers were saying that she was exiled by Louis Napoleon, she came to Paris to solicit from him a commutation of sentence for her friend, Marc Dufraisse! He received her with the greatest kindness, shook hands with her, and granted her request.

The worst news I have to give you is my lameness. I stayed in that damp house too long; still, I was getting better day by day. Then came a glut of rain, and the rheumatism seized my knees and ankles. Now we have east wind and frost, which is as bad. Mr. May prohibits the pony chaise, which I have not entered for nearly three months, and can hardly walk at all. I cannot stand upright—go quite double—and Sam is forced to lift me from step to step to get upstairs. Mr. May says that warm weather will set all to rights, but when warm weather will come, heaven knows. There is not a sign of spring in field or hedgerow; not a bird on the trees, or a primrose in the flowery lanes. The only symptom of the season is a little shepherd boy, who drives his pretty flock of ewes and lambs to water, at a ford opposite my window. To be sure Mr. Bennett is coming, who always brings rain. We continue equally delighted with the house.

May 20, 1852.

Thank you for your most kind and welcome letter. Thank you for liking my book. It has

several times been reprinted in America, where it is by far more popular than anything I ever wrote, and Galignani has just reprinted it at Paris. Every day I get books upon books and from ten to twenty letters about it from all sorts of people and all places. Only yesterday the wife of President Sparks (the head of the great American College of Cambridge, near Boston) wrote to me to beg me to come with Sam, and K., and Fanchon, and the pony, and live three or four years with her and her husband; and really this is only a specimen of the enthusiasm created.

Another thing you will be glad to hear. Mr. Bentley took the same fancy for a portrait that you have long had, so Mr. Lucas came down here and has made a marvellous work of art—a portrait as like as that of my dear father, and far more wonderful considering the materials he had to work on. It is an oval of the size of life. The head finished like a miniature, the rest more slightly painted; but the thing is a wonder of truth and ideality. The expression sweet, and calm, and happy—looking not as I suppose I ever do—but as one might fancy it just possible I might do when thinking of some one whom I loved. A vulgar painter would have fallen into the trap of over-animation, which in an old woman especially is dangerous, but Mr. Lucas has exquisite taste. It is now in the hands of the engraver; so is a miniature taken when I was between three and four years old, which is likely

to be engraved by two artists. I think I can promise you a copy of this. I have promised Mr. Lucas to sit for another portrait—a full-length—in his own studio, where of course the light will be much better than in my little parlour. All this sounds as if I were well, but I continue so lame that I am forced to be lifted in and out of the pony chaise and from step to step upstairs at night, and I feel so heavy and helpless that I seem to cumber the earth.

The east wind after staying with us for ten weeks has at last changed, and we have leaves on the trees, and nightingales in the woods, and the wandering bird from which this pretty place takes its name has appeared over our pools and our bright river. I like our little house more and more, although I have lost the kind and accomplished friend and neighbour who so worthily filled the mansion where Lord Clarendon wrote his history. The family, however, remain, and I trust I shall not lose the charming young woman—poor Sir Henry's eldest daughter—who is my chief companion. She is a great admirer of the President, although not quite so fervent as I am. Mrs. Browning too is quite carried away by his ability. She sent me word that Madame Sand (with whom she had become well acquainted) went to him to beg the release of some of Les Rouges, and commutation of sentence for others. He granted her request, spoke to her in the kindest manner, shook

hands with her, and said at parting—"Vous verrez, vous serez contente de moi."—"Et vous," she replied, "vous serez content de moi." I firmly believe that he is the greatest man since the Emperor.

I cannot thank you enough for all that you have told me of him and the Countess Stephanie's family. Was not Count Tascher de la Pagerie a nephew of the Empress Josephine? I think I remember reading of him as a young man serving under the Emperor, going through all the grades, and looked after rather more than less strictly for the connexion which was affectionately recognized in private. There is nothing more remarkable in the fine, heroic character of Louis Napoleon than the attachment he shows to all old connexions, and the way in which he recognizes and returns twenty-fold all kindnesses shown to him in his unprosperous days. I am expecting every day a visit from my friend Mr. Fields, who has passed the last month in Paris, and been at all the balls and fêtes in virtue of his intimacy with the American consul, whose family he has accompanied everywhere. He is to bring me all he can pick up of portraits, biographies, works and speeches, etc.—I dare say fifty books at least—having as the great publisher of America connexions with all the chief booksellers of Paris. He says that none of the portraits do justice to that pale, earnest face, so full of deep feeling—that it is completely the face

of a man of genius and of sensibility ; the calm being of course that sensibility strongly repressed.

If I write another book I shall certainly give an article to him, for the injustice done to him by English newspapers and English books is revolting. It is only amongst high natures that one meets with his advocates. Old Lady Stanley of Alderley is one.

How I rejoice that your book is coming out! I feel sure of its success. The charm of Bath to me, at least the principal charm, was Prior Park, where I passed most of my time with the fascinating Bishop Baines, who died the succeeding year. He was the head of the English Catholics, and would have prevented their subsequent false steps had he lived—knowing the national character well. Continue to talk to me of Louis Napoleon and yourself.

The following letter is to John Ruskin's father, John James Ruskin. He showed Miss Mitford much kindness in these last years of her life. Her affection for and admiration of his son touched him deeply.

Miss Mitford to John James Ruskin.

July 1, 1852.

Your most kind letter and packet found me very poorly in bed, and have done me as much good as even your kind heart would wish. . . .

Next to your goodness, which shows itself in a thousand forms, the thing that so pleased and roused me was that charming volume. If your son had never written a line of verse in his life he would still have been among the greatest of English poets—for that eloquent prose with its glorious rhythm and its descriptions which we see is poetry of the very highest class—poetry that will last as long as the language and continue fresh through its changes, or rather help to preserve it from change like the kindred pages of Jeremy Taylor. Still I love to see the faculty in its various forms—and certainly he may be as distinguished in the one as in the other if ever he should turn his attention that way. I confess that metre goes for much in my pleasure also, and perhaps my delight in those fine Scythian Poems, which is quite equal to yours, may be partly traceable to that cause—but surely there is great power also. We are not entirely carried away by sound. The Gipsies has for me a charm of subject as well as of execution. I have seen much of the wandering race. They are not all destitute of religion. The clergyman of my late parish told me that in christening a gipsy child he was surprised to find the mother knowing the responses, indeed the whole service by heart—and she was of a roving tribe, not one of those partly reclaimed by the efforts of Mr. Crabbe of Southampton, who, aided by wealthier men, has done more for them in the

way of educating the children and civilizing the parents than had been thought possible. After all they are a great mystery—language, country, race—a mystery that will never be solved, since even their own traditions stop short of their origin.[1] I should never finish if I were to tell you all I admire in a volume so remarkable for precocious power.

To come to less spiritual things, let me thank you heartily for your most kind attention in sending me this rare wine. My expected guests are Americans, and although those whom I see are probably amongst those who care least for such matters, yet they are, I fancy, universally connoisseurs in wine, and it is pleasant to be able to offer them what they like. One of those whom I expect is the very best specimen of the nation that I have ever seen—a partner in Ticknor's great publishing house at Boston. He (Mr. Fields) raised Hawthorne by his judicious patronage from poverty to competence—indeed actually saved him from starvation—and he is now diffusing through the States (not pirating, but paying the writers as if they were American authors) such books as the collected works of De Quincey (seven volumes), which no English bookseller would venture to publish, so much of taste and acquirement does it demand from the reader. Besides which he is a most charming person—bold, frank, and genial; and of

[1] It is worth while to compare a charming passage on gipsies in "Recollections of a Literary Life," i, pp. 146–9.

his kindness to me you may judge when I tell you that he has promised to take our poor little boy under his especial protection to place him in his own store. We are to send him to Boston in five years, when he will be fourteen—his mother is charged to do so if I be dead—and if the child continue as hopeful as he now is he cannot fail to achieve an honourable independence. You may imagine the anxiety which this most kind assurance (he has even sent us letters to his brother and his partners in case of his own death) has taken from my mind.[1]

I have had a charming letter from Mr. John Ruskin, dated Venice; and I take the freedom to enclose my answer to you, who will, I suppose, be beginning to expect him.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

July 19, 1852.

Your kind letter found me confined to my bed, with a violent attack of fever, from which—after a severe illness of nearly a month—I am just recovering. I have not been well since Christmas, and indeed for two or three years I have been failing much. I lived too long in that miserable

[1] The arrangement, however, seems ultimately to have fallen through, for on July 14, 1858, Ruskin encloses in a letter to his father one from Miss Mitford's former servant K., asking him, for Miss Mitford's sake, to try and get the boy a situation.

cottage. If I had been there now I should have died; but here I have the coolest house possible, seated upon a little ascent which seems to catch every breeze, and yet shaded by fine old trees from the sun, free from dust and noise, looking upon cool water and green fields, and with the best and kindest neighbours in the world. Lady Russell, who had not been beyond her park gates since her husband's death till my illness called her, comes every night to see me with her daughters—sweet young women—so that it is like a sister and nephews and nieces; and, besides, all the rest of the people are full of attention. So is dear Mr. May, so are K. and Sam, and at last I am getting better, but very slowly. Indeed, dear friend, I do feel for you in the loss of Madame de Bonstetten. I can conceive nothing more dreary than the loneliness of a great house.

I do hope that your book will be very successful, and give you pleasure and profit in one. Since I have been ill I have been reading Mr. Hawthorne's new romance (not, I believe, even yet published). I read it in the actual copy, that when I had done it went to the author, and was the first sight he had of his own thoughts in print. It is called "The Blithedale Romance," and is a book of the present state of New England; full of beautiful writing, with a grand tragic construction, and one or two scenes of great power and passion; nevertheless, to me there is a want of reality; the characters

are too exceptional, and an honest old farmer, who has nothing to do with the story, and is not mentioned half a dozen times, is the only person I like, simply because he is flesh and blood.[1]

I have charming letters from Mr. Hawthorne, so entirely unspoilt, and from dear Dr. Holmes (my pet of all, whose poems are reprinted here in consequence of my book), and from most of their other worthies; and dear Mr. Fields means to take little Henry into his own great house at Boston. We are to send him to America when he is fourteen, or rather his mother is, whether I live or die, so he is nobly provided for.

These are pleasant things: on the other hand I have lost one of the friends whom I had learnt to love most fondly—Mrs. Robert Dering. We had never met, although her charming sister, Miss Shee (they are sisters of Sir George Shee, who is, I think, our ambassador at Stuttgart, certainly an ambassador somewhere), a most charming woman, had come to see me. With Mrs. Dering I had only corresponded, but never in my life read letters so full of a sweet and winning affectionateness, of personal charm—a charm like the scent of flowers—(you will find something of this in her poem called "Church Services," in my book). She was in the prime of life, happy as a wife, and mother of one hopeful son. She had not been well, and the last letter I had from her

[1] This is excellent criticism of the story.

was in pencil. Then came the news that she was dead. Amongst other kindnesses she had sent me some exquisite climbing roses from Hertfordshire, to clothe the front of my house. Now her flowers are blossoming under my windows, and she is gone![1]

Just before my illness I had a visit from two ladies from Paris. One of them, a splendid old woman of seventy-six, had known my father and mother before their marriage, had been present at their wedding, had been trusted—herself a child of eleven—to hold the baby, and had never seen any of us after we moved from Alresford. You may imagine how much she was struck and interested when she met in my book with notices of all the places and people whom she remembered so well. She was full of life and enthusiasm, and went away promising to come and spend a day with me next summer. She is far more likely to see next summer than I am! The Brownings are in London. Mr. Ruskin is also expected here from Venice this week. This is all I know, dear friend, and much for a sick woman.

Write me anything you hear of Louis Napoleon. I have been reading his works, which I got in three volumes from Paris. How very beautiful some of them are, especially the narrative of the Strasburg affair in a letter to his mother. By this it appears he was engaged to his cousin the

[1] Cf. "Recollections of a Literary Life," ii, p. 134.

Princess Mathilde, now the wife of Count Anatole Demidoff. Do read them. There is also a little bit upon exile and a preface to his history of Artillery, which are most interesting. Also I have a fine bust of him and another of Béranger, brought me by Mr. Fields, and two memoirs of Louis Napoleon. He is a really great man. Do you know Emilie Carlén's novels?[1] "The Birthright" has been well translated by a young lady whom I know, one of the richest heiresses in England, Miss Percy, of Guy's Cliff.

September 26, 1852.

Thank you heartily for your most kind and welcome letter, especially for all that you tell me of Louis Napoleon. What a romance it is! and how completely he justifies my predilection! I know you will always tell me any authentic stories of this great man, and of her who is to be, or is not to be, his wife. She seems fit to take place at his side, and yet I am not sure that a well-educated, healthy, handsome French girl might not do just as well. One has a prejudice against princesses out of Germany ever since Marie Louise, and I dislike the marriage of relations, although in this instance not near. However, Providence has worked admirably for him hitherto, aided by that first and rarest of

[1] Emilie Flygare-Carlén. The translation of "The Birthright" appeared in three volumes in 1851.

his faculties, which has through life turned every misfortune and difficulty to account, making of his prison the best college, and letting the enmities and distractions of the National Assembly conduct to the salvation of France on the 2nd of December. Thank you for all you have told me again and again.

Now you will ask to know of me. I am much better, although the low fever which prostrated me in the summer comes and goes, and will not be entirely vanquished. But even that has its bright side. You have heard, of course, of William Harness, the celebrated London preacher, and still more celebrated talker? He has been the chosen friend of all that is eminent for the last half century, ever since he was a boy at Harrow, where Lord Byron contracted the love for him that made him offer him the dedication of the "Childe Harold."

Well, about six weeks ago he heard how ill I had been and still continued, and came to see me; and finding me even more changed than he expected, he resolved to establish himself close by and take care of me. Accordingly, in a few days, he left Deepdene and Mr. Hope's delightful conversation, came to Swallowfield, hunted up a lodging, and spent three weeks with no other purpose or employment. Nothing could be more judicious than his way of going on. He never made his appearance at my cottage till two o'clock,

when we drove out together. Then he went to his lodgings to dinner, partly not to give trouble, but chiefly to give me two or three hours of perfect rest. At eight he and the Russells came to tea, and he read Shakespeare till bedtime. He is by very far the finest reader I ever heard, and no pleasure can be higher than hearing that greatest of poets so rendered. Under this pleasant treatment no wonder that I improved. The Hopes too came to spend a morning here—the accomplished and elegant gentleman who bears the weight of eighty thousand a year, with most delightful simplicity and unaffectedness, and who is that rare thing a son worthy in taste and talent of a most distinguished father—the pretty, pleasant, French wife, and the lovely little girl (now about nine years old, as light and buoyant as a bird) who will be the richest heiress in England. Never was a child[1] more admirably trained, so that in her case one hopes she may escape the evils of a destiny full of danger.

My admirable friend has left me now, but he is to return in November, having even retained his lodgings, and I have been occupied with a series of visitors ever since. Last week we had three parties, arriving at two o'clock and staying till the last train. Two of my guests were Mr. Holloway, the printseller, and his very nice and clever wife. I tell you of them because I know that you will be

[1] She married the sixth Duke of Newcastle.

pleased to hear their errand. Mr. Dillon, one of our merchant princes, whose collection of engravings would sell, they say, for £60,000, and is one of the finest private collections in the world, has commissioned Mr. Holloway to illustrate a copy of my "Recollections" at an unlimited expense, to spare nothing for the purpose, but to render it as perfect as money can make it. Now Mr. Holloway is celebrated for these luxuries of the library; he has achieved such triumphs before, so that Mr. Dillon (as he well knows) will have all that taste and skill and experience can bring to the aid of his own munificent order.

Mr. Holloway says that it will be the most magnificent copy of any modern book. The "Recollections" are to be let into seven or eight quarto volumes, and he brought in the first volume to show me. Such a collection of gems of art I never beheld. The rarest and finest portraits, often many of one person and always the rarest and the best, ranging from the noble minds of our great old poets, from the Charleses and the Cromwells, to George Faulkner (of whom, by the way, none was thought to exist, until this copy turned up accidentally in a supplementary volume of Lord Chesterfield); the most curious old prints of old houses—one, for instance, taken some two hundred years ago (I think before the siege) of Donnington Castle, and besides the print the very identical drawing from which that print was made. Nothing

can go beyond this. Beautiful modern drawings, by living artists, sent expressly to the spots that I mention—you would recognize much of the scenery where we have walked together;—scarce and characteristic autographs—a very fine one of Pope—nothing is too odd for Mr. Holloway. There is a full-length portrait of George III in colours, so like that the old king seems really alive—not a caricature, but almost producing the effect of one by the perfection with which the peculiarities are hit off. You may imagine that this is very gratifying. The number of proper names and names of places, of course, had something to do with the choice (as I hear that two other persons are illustrating the book in a less elaborate manner), but a liking for the writer as a writer (for, personally, I am acquainted with none of them) has its full share. It is the only work which Mr. Dillon has ever thought of illustrating, and will live alone amongst his magnificent engravings.[1]

Yesterday I had my dear friend Mr. Bennoch with two artists; one of London, the other (Mr. Thompson) from America. The London artist is about to realize a fancy of mine, and to paint the signing of the letters to William the Third in the

[1] Miss Mitford's small volumes became six royal quarto volumes; each cost £150. Miss Mitford only lived to see the first volume. Dillon had illustrated "Childe Harold" in a most elaborate manner. The single volume as published by Murray became eight large imperial folio volumes and cost an almost fabulous sum.

Crypt of Lady Place; you will find my idea of it in the chapter on Mr. Noel. He is a young man, very modest, but Mr. Bennoch says very full of talent. Mr. Bennoch is another of our merchant princes, a man of great talent, a fine speaker, and true poet, who will, they say, some day or other represent the City, and who, having no child, spends his large fortune in goodnesses and kindnesses. I have not seen the Brownings, though they talk of coming. Poor Lady Lovelace is dying of internal cancer, suffering martyrdom. The Duke[1] has really left no will, only a few memoranda. This is certain, in spite of the newspapers. The new Duke told it to Mr. ——. The article in the "Times" was written by Macaulay, but by far the best character of the old Duke is a very noble poem in "Punch." The poor people here tremble for their work, for the Duke employed largely. I fear for the trees; nobody can guess how Lord Douro will turn out. I suppose nobody ever succeeded to a large property at the age of forty-five of whom so little was known in his own place. He is handsome and exemplary but cold.

When is the "Chamois Shooting" to come out? There is a great dearth of striking books. I have been much interested lately by the production, only last week, of an oratorio called "Jerusalem," at the Norwich Festival. The composer, Mr. Henry Pearson, who has lived for the last twelve years in

[1] Duke of Wellington, died September 14, 1852.

Germany, and is married to a German lady, is the brother of the person whom, next to the Russells, I love best hereabouts, the Rev. Hugh Pearson, Vicar of Sunning, that choice thing a lover of poetry, and a thorough man of letters, who is no author.

The Oratorio was a complete ovation, so far as the audience was concerned, and appears from the critiques to be a work of real genius, but startling from its novelty. He will take a great place among musicians.

Towards the end of December, 1852, Miss Mitford had a serious accident. She was thrown out of her pony carriage, and the lack of power in her limbs already caused by rheumatism was greatly increased; indeed she was unable to move without assistance. Her mind was in no way affected, and her letters are as full of interest as ever.

She was considering the publication of a further volume of literary recollections, and intended that some of the chapters should deal with French writers.

James Payn, to whose visits she refers,[1] sought her advice in literary matters at this period, and has described her as a "dear little old lady, looking like a venerable fairy, with bright sparkling eyes, a clear incisive voice, and a laugh that carried you away with it." Again he writes:

[1] See p. 250.

"I was ushered upstairs (for at that time, crippled by rheumatism, she was unable to leave her room) into a small apartment, lined with books from floor to ceiling, and fragrant with flowers; its tenant rose from her arm-chair with difficulty, but with a sunny smile and a charming manner bade me welcome." [1]

Boner suggested that Miss Mitford should try the cure at Wildbad, but so long a journey was out of the question in her state of health.

She saw much of Charles Kingsley this year, and he has left on record his impressions of her:

"I can never forget the little figure rolled up in two chairs in the little Swallowfield room, packed round with books up to the ceiling, on to the floor—the little figure with clothes on, of course, but of no recognized or recognizable pattern; and somewhere out of the upper end of the heap, gleaming under a great deep globular brow, two such eyes as I never, perhaps, saw in any other Englishwoman—though I believe she must have had

[1] Cf. Payn, "Literary Recollections," 1884.

French blood in her veins, to breed such eyes, and such a tongue, for the beautiful speech which came out of that ugly (it was that) face ; and the glitter and depth, too, of the eyes, like live coals. . . . She was a triumph of mind over matter."

Miss Mitford, ill in body though she was, confined to her room, wheeled with difficulty from bed to the fireside, unable to stand or walk, or when in bed to move or turn, and even in writing compelled to have the inkpot held for her, was occupied with two pieces of literary work. Her faculties were undimmed. She had undertaken at Mr. Bentley's request to write a long tale, and she was preparing a collected edition of her dramatic works.

January 6, 1853.

I was just wondering that I did not hear from you, and hoping very sincerely that no illness or misfortune of any kind had caused your silence. I rejoice to find that it has arisen from other causes, and having myself suffered so much from being hurried through the press, am tempted to congratulate you upon a slowness which will almost certainly be for the good of your book. Thank you very much for your kind wishes. Ah! I want them

much, for I am in very evil plight. Last Monday fortnight, nearly three weeks ago, I was thrown violently out of my little pony-chaise on the hard road in Lady Russell's park. No bone was broken, but such was the shock to the system, that ten days after the accident Mr. May could not satisfy himself that there was neither fracture nor dislocation without a most minute and searching re-examination; and I am at this moment writing to you with my left arm bound tightly to my body, and without the possibility of raising either foot from the ground. I am lifted into bed, lifted out of bed, and have not the power of making the slightest change of posture. Mr. May says that the case will be long, but that he has reason to hope and believe I shall regain my former state, such as it was, for if I had not been very feeble and very rheumatic, this accident would have been much less serious.

In the midst of all this, K., who has been married to Sam for above a twelvemonth, has been confined with a little girl. So much for the evil—the good is, that the two parts of me thoroughly uninjured are the head and the right hand, and that Sam has been a real treasure in this affair, lifting me about with a tenderness, a handiness, and a power that no woman could have, and superintending a giddy young maid and a stupid old nurse after a fashion that nobody would believe without seeing. Lady Russell has walked up every day through the dirt and the rain like a real sister. I have seen nobody

but the Russells and Mr. May till to-day, but I suppose I must begin to let in one or two friends now, so that upon the whole I am mending.

Now to other things. I think I told you that Hawthorne was writing a new romance, but it bids fair to be interrupted, for by a packet just received from America I find that the new President Pierce was his class-fellow at college, and has been for the last year or two his neighbour at Concord (where Emerson also lives), that they are in communication every day, and that there is no doubt but Hawthorne will be called to high office as soon as his friend takes possession of the presidential chair. Three years ago he was starving. All my correspondents say that no European can even imagine the scramble for place and the dirty intrigues that take place every four years in the model republic. Wise were the French to consolidate their government and to choose the really great man now at their head, to plan for them large measures and wise ameliorations. I rejoice in all that he has done, and think the Princess Mathilde a great simpleton to desert a man of genius for a mere common young prince. For my part, I am not sorry that he has lost her. There is madness in her father's blood, and health of mind and body is above all what he should seek. His own bodily health, I hear, is not strong, and he regrets so much the garden of the Elysée, that even now the Parisians think him likely to return thither. In

spite of the magnificence which surrounds him, his own tastes are as simple as his uncle's. A friend of mine who saw his private apartments at St. Cloud, just as they had been fitted up under his own direction this summer, told me that he never saw such an absence of finery or luxury. It was all in the severest simplicity and the most perfect taste. He is a great man, and pre-eminently manly in every way.

Of course you have seen our calamities in the way of ministers. Henry Drummond (the very odd and very clever member for Surrey—you know whom I mean)[1]—who is a great friend of Disraeli, says that he certainly broke a blood-vessel at the beginning of the session, and that there was not three months' life left in him if he had had to stand the worrying of so strong an opposition—so the loss of place has saved him.

I heard yesterday from Miss Goldsmid that the Jew Bill is sure to be carried now.[2] Many circumstances have helped—the Duke's death, the coalition ministry. The prospect has revived her father, who was dying of heart complaint. I trust he will live to see the measure carried. It has been the labour of his life, for he was the real working man of the movement. Every citizen has a claim to his civil rights, were he Mahomedan or Hindoo. Every-

[1] (1786–1860.) M.P. for West Surrey 1847–60; he founded a professorship for Political Economy at Oxford in 1825.

[2] The Act enabling Jews to sit in Parliament was not passed until 1858.

body seems to hope that this ministry may stay in: nothing is so bad as perpetual change, and the important question of the colonies will, at all events, have the benefit of Sir William Molesworth's advice, although it be not his department.

Within this month I have had several applications from Mr. Bentley for a second series of my "Recollections." I suppose if I recover sufficiently that I must try. Should I attempt another series I shall devote some chapters to French literature. Do you know the delicious ballads of Casimir Delavigne? I have been collecting them for two or three years, and was pleased and astonished to see two of them quoted in the "Memoirs of Alexandre Dumas." You know that the author never seems to have guessed at their value, that very few are printed among his "Poésies," and that they are scattered here and there, set to music, and what not. I wish if you meet with any you would send them to me. I particularly want one of which the refrain is "Chez l'ambassadeur de France," [1] but any will be

[1] Cf. Delavigne, "Derniers Chants," 1845. A tragic "ballade," entitled "La toilette de Constance," in which a girl of eighteen, after dressing for a ball where she is to meet her lover, is burnt to death through a spark accidentally flying on to her thin dress as she stands before the fire admiring herself in the mirror above the chimney piece. The "envoi" runs:

Adieu bal, plaisir, amour!
On se dit: Pauvre Constance!
Et l'on danse jusqu'au jour
Chez l'ambassadeur de France.

welcome upon the chance of my not having it. Tell Madame de Bonstetten how much obliged to her I am for her kind recollection. Remember me to her and to your sister. Is the Princess happy? Are both those young girls happily married? It must be an anxiety to those who have been the foster-mothers of their minds. And how are your young men turning out? They have quoted my article on "Webster" in nearly every paper in the United States, and I have heard with great pleasure that of the many things written about him, it was the one that most gratified his family. Mr. Fields sent me an exquisite monody on that great statesman, and I really believe it to be his own, worth all that has been written on the Duke a million times over. The new Duke has never signed his title yet. He still writes "Douro."

Queen Victoria sent my friend Miss Skerrett to Germany this autumn to see the Baroness Lehzen.[1] She is living in an independent principality in the midst of the Kingdom of Hanover. Nobody likes "Esmond."[2] The love-story is detestable, and besides that, it is long and tedious. I demur, too, to the criticism; holding, with Hazlitt, that Steele

[1] Queen Victoria's first governess. She was the daughter of a Lutheran clergyman of Hanover. At her death in 1870 the Queen wrote: "She knew me from six months old, and from my fifth to my eighteenth year devoted all her care and energies to me." (Cf. Sir Sidney Lee, "Queen Victoria," 1904, p. 20.)

[2] "Esmond" was published in 1852.

was worth a thousand Addisons, and Bolingbroke by far the finest prose writer of them all. The last volume of the "Stones of Venice" will be finished in March—finer than the first.

January 27, 1853.

I have to thank you for your most welcome letter, and not only for the letter but for the great kindness of sending me Casimir Delavigne's ballad.[1] I have "La Mort du Bandit," "Le Conclave," "L'Âme de Purgatoire," "Le Gondolier," "Neria," and the charming one of which the refrain is, "O Vierge Marie, pour moi priez Dieu." "Le Chien du Louvre" I have not, and shall be most thankful for it, so I shall for any others that you may receive from your correspondents. The four pieces of my collection are in a little volume called "Œuvres Complètes de Casimir Delavigne—Poésies." Dumas underrates him—he was not of the romantic school, although his plays are worth Dumas' twenty times over, and indeed worth every modern French dramatist except Victor Hugo, who would have been a splendid tragic writer if he had not carried contrast and effect to such an excess. Also, can you get me any notice of that extraordinary satirist Auguste Barbier?[2] I have his works. They seem to me quite tremendous in

[1] See note, p. 234.

[2] Henri Auguste Barbier (1805–82). His satires entitled "Iambes," first issued in 1831, have had over thirty editions.

force and savageness, just what I suppose Juvenal to have been. Louis Philippe bought him off, I believe, and then he attempted other poetry with less success. He is just a man to give specimens of, if one can find any admissible; but what is become of him? I should have expected him, if he had been still alive, to have come out rampant in Ledru Rollin's time, but surely one should have heard of him? at all events he is a prodigious "puller down of kings"; and of everything else. Do you know anything of a writer of Chansons—Dupont?[1] "Le drôle des drôles" my correspondent called him, and if it be drôle proper tant mieux, but if drôle improper tant pis. Perhaps the most likely is that he is like Béranger, much wrong, and some blameless; in that case I shall get him. Some of Alfred de Musset is pretty, I think, but I have only one collection, from 1840 to 1849. Is there any worth having before or since? And are any of the women good? I have Mme. Tastu,[2] two series, and some of her things are I think of considerable merit, especially the garden scene in "Romeo and Juliet," which comes nearer Shakespeare than I ever thought any French translation could do; also I think Mme. E. de Girardin's "École des Journalistes" clever,

[1] Pierre Dupont (1821–70), a native of Lyons, was a writer of popular songs.

[2] Sabine-Casimir-Amable Voïart (1798–1885) married Joseph Tastu (d. 1849) in 1816. She is the author of original poems as well as of translations.

especially with the poignant letter of Jules Janin calling her "mon beau confrère"—do you remember?—are any of her other things good?

Now to come to my Emperor. How charmed I am with this marriage, the finest homage ever paid to woman and to love, and how more than charmed with the speech in which he announced it; so sudden, so unexpected, so condensed, so full of bold and truthful appeal to common human feeling! The paragraph where he speaks of Josephine, where he claims the title of Parvenu, where he speaks of his destined wife as "the woman whom I love and whom I respect," all these go straight to our best sympathies, and *there* has always been his strength and the real proof of his genius. There are little passages in the three volumes of his published works which have the same touch. Mr. Bennoch pointed out to me to-day in a letter written from Lord Middleton's fine place in Nottinghamshire, that there was almost a prophecy of his doings in my "Rienzi," in the third act where the citizens are talking of him:—

First Citizen. Will he dare?
Second. Dare! Why, thou saw'st his spirit. Now his power
Watches his will, and never lineal prince
Sate firmer on the throne, or lightlier swayed
The reins of empire. He hath swept away
The oppressors and extortioners; hath won
Kingly allies, hath reconciled the Pope,
Hath quelled the Barons.

God grant him a long and happy reign! Your friend, the Countess Stephanie, must enjoy his triumph. For my part I look upon this marriage as the finest thing he has done. To give to mutual affection, to honest preference the place hitherto held by a miserable conventional prejudice; to release kings and princes, not only from domestic coldness or domestic misery, but from the frightful consequences of these inter-marriages to their innocent offspring, from scrofula and epilepsy, from madness and idiotism. I earnestly trust that the example will be followed. I have the "Homes of American Authors," a nice book, and very snugly housed they are. I am waiting anxiously for your book.

February 1.

To-day came two more charming lyrics of Casimir Delavigne. Thank you again and again.

March 20, 1853.

I saw the other day a letter from a stiff English lady, who had been visiting one of the new Empress's ladies of honour, who told her that her Majesty shot thirteen brace of partridges one morning at St. Cloud, adding—"in spite of that, she is so sweet and charming a creature that any man might fall in love with her." I like all that I hear of her, but nothing better than the way in which Mrs. Browning sums up her character, "As brave as a lion, and as true as a dog."

Now let me thank you over and over for Casimir. "Le Chien du Louvre" is indeed a *chef d'œuvre*, and so is the drinking song. Thank you a thousand times. Never was anything more against me than this weather. Yesterday morning I was awakened by a tremendous noise, which proved to be men with axes breaking the ice to water the horses before going to Reading market. We have snow every day, and, in short, Christmas weather at Easter.

Your book has not yet arrived, but I cannot bear the ungrateful look of keeping silence longer. Be quite sure I will do all I can for it by recommending it in all quarters, and I hope to review it in my "Second Series." I find that the influence of these volumes has been great:—Dr. Holmes has been reprinted in consequence, so has Holcroft, and, they tell me, two or three other books; and Whittier and Hawthorne both say that I have done more for their reputation than all the rest of the critics put together—and that not only in England but in America. Longfellow, I understand, says the same. My article on Daniel Webster was reprinted in nearly every newspaper in the States, and his family sent me word that of all that had been written on him it gave them the most pleasure. Mr. Fields tells me that their house at Boston sent this Christmas for a thousand copies of Bohn's edition of "Our Village," in spite of the many editions of all sorts published in America;

and I have just corrected my "Recollections" for a cheaper edition—the first having been enormous. I say all these vain things just to prove that I may hope to be of some use to you hereafter, if I be well enough to bring out a second series.

I have just been looking over a charming little work, three ballads by the *soi-disant* Mary Maynard, called the "Heart of Montrose" (do you know that strange romantic story in the "Life and Times of Montrose"?)—and a novel not yet printed, by Mrs. Acton Tindal, which bids fair to be full of life; also Mr. Justice Talfourd's new tragedy, "The Castilian," printed, but not published; although as Moxon's name is in the title-page, and the "not published" merely written with a pen, I presume he means to bring it out some time or other. At present, to quote a very affectionate letter which accompanied it, "it is a very private sin," having only been given to eight or ten people in London, and nobody except myself in Berkshire; indeed he waited till he got to Oxford before he sent it to me. The subject is historical—a revolt of the Castilians of Toledo, under John de Padilla, in the early part of the reign of Charles V. It is very like "Ion," much more so than the other tragedies; but as the character is, like his, full of scruples and sentiment, it bears little mark of the Castilian of the age between Cortes and Alva. Nevertheless it has

much beauty. Very oddly, old Mariana [1] who gives so many traits for the drama, leaves off his history just before; so he has been forced to go to the far less picturesque pages of Prescott and Robertson. I doubt, though, whether he knows the old Spaniard, of whom I have an old folio translation, almost as characteristic as Lord Berners' "Froissart."

Alfred Tennyson has published an amended edition of his poem on the Duke's death; [2] but nothing written on that subject was to be compared with a magnificent monody on Daniel Webster, by Dr. Parsons,[3] an American, who has written very little, but whose lines on a Print of Dante are said to be the finest thing that any American has produced, and that is saying much.

I heard to-day from Mrs. Browning. She is writing a new poem,[4] and her husband is also busy with a new work.[5] They are still at Florence, but will proceed to Rome and Naples, and arrive here in the summer, I suppose by sea. I am sure to like your book, and I shall write as soon after receiving it as I have an opportunity of sending to the post.

[1] Miss Mitford refers to the "Historiæ de Rebus Hispaniæ," 1592, by Juan Mariana (1536–1624). It comes down to the accession of Charles V, and the author's Spanish translation (1601–9) is a classic.

[2] "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," 1852.

[3] Cf. Thomas William Parsons (1819–92), "Poems," 1854. He translated Dante's "Inferno."

[4] "Aurora Leigh," published in 1856.

[5] "Men and Women," published in 1855.

April 22, 1853.

I write in post haste, being obliged to send off at once to Reading. Owing to one thing or another, it is only two days since I received your beautiful book.[1] The delay however enables me to say that the general reception has been most gratifying. The "Spectator" (certainly the best and most influential of our weekly critical papers) has been highly favourable, and so I really believe has been the whole press. Three people who were here during these two days have said at once that they would order it in their book-club, and I have written and shall write about it to all quarters where I think it likely to do good; especially to Miss Skerrett to mention it to Prince Albert, whom it would certainly interest.

Now, in my opinion, it is a work of the highest merit; one which shows unaffectedly the character of the author more than any I almost ever read. Full of graphic detail, of novelty, and of interest, and exquisitely got up, fit for a drawing-room table and fit for a bookcase.

It must do you immense good in point of reputation. The only fault to my apprehension is that it is perhaps one fourth part too long. I say this only as a warning for the future, for the error (if it be one—perhaps it is only my fancy) lies in the original writing, in the spinning out dialogue a little too much where there

[1] "Chamois Hunting in the Mountains of Bavaria."

is no immediate point of story or character to be brought out. Perhaps too this fancy of mine is the result of my having just, when I began your book, finished Mr. Kingsley's "Hypatia"—also a gift book—which is such a whirl of incident and passion. But *your* book is one to be very proud of—one that makes me very proud of my friend and for my friend. All other sporting books have about them dashes of recklessness and vanity. In yours there is an evident truth: one trusts every word that you say. It would prepare the way for a work on German life and manners which I think would have a great success. I must write about it to Mr. Fields. I should like to see it well reprinted in America. I have just been writing to Lord John Russell, being thereunto compelled by circumstances. My friend, Dr. Holmes, recited at the end of a lecture on Byron and Moore, a very sweet poem to the memory of the latter, quite like one of Moore's very best. Well, he and another friend of mine, Mrs. Sparks, wife of Jared Sparks, president of Harvard University, sent it to me to transmit to Lord John, to be by him transmitted to Mrs. Moore. I transcribe one stanza:

> If in his cheek unholy blood
> Burned for one youthful hour,
> 'Twas but the flushing of the bud
> That bloomed a milkwhite flower.

I must write a longer letter another time. I am still a prisoner.

May 31, 1853.

I am still a prisoner, so that all I can tell you is that every one to whom I have spoken or written of your book speaks of it in the highest terms, and that what I can hear of the reviews (and I have enquired more about that work than I ever did about any other) is most gratifying. To me the "Chamois Hunting" seems likely to be of great use to you permanently. It has the strong indelible stamp of a true and pure mind—of thorough gentility of thought and of habits—of a strong feeling for the picturesque and the beautiful, with a manliness not always found with these qualities, and with a scholarship kept down by the subject. I would leave this book as it is, unless by curtailing certain parts a little too much alike you could make room for a chapter on deer-stalking. Just read your own last fifty pages, which are infinitely more rapid and more varied than the rest, and you will see how in a future work (for my criticism was altogether prospective) you would gain by going at a somewhat quicker pace over the ground. But I did not mean in the slightest degree to find fault with this book, certainly the best of its sort I have ever read, but only, whilst the impression of a careful perusal was strong upon me, to suggest the only change that any one could wish in a manner full of good taste. Your sister has cause to be much gratified with such a book. God grant that the result may be what she

and I most wish. Even if not immediate I feel that the good effect will be certain and permanent. It is *un fait accompli*, and will not fail to bear its fruits. I am sure that your German friends must all like it. There is a high-bred simplicity from the first page to the last.

Is it since I wrote to you that I have had to transmit to Lord John Russell, for him to forward to Mrs. Moore, some lines on her husband's memory by Dr. Holmes, so like what Moore would himself have written that it is really marvellous? They were sent to me by Mrs. Sparks, and most graciously acknowledged by his Lordship.

Just after that came a packet from Mr. Fields containing no less than five presentation copies from different American writers (Whittier, Stoddart, etc.), one of them containing by very far the finest poem (by Dr. Parsons, also a physician of Boston) that has ever crossed the Atlantic. With them arrived three more volumes, making ten, of De Quincey's racy prose, and two numbers of a new magazine just set up in New York, one of them most curious for its accounts of the Rappings; about which the New York people seem to have gone mad, and another for a most singular history of a new claimant to the French crown, or rather to the Louis XVII pretendership, who has just turned up among the Red Indians. If one did not know that whenever there is a demand for believers the supply is never wanting, one should wonder

that some hundreds of thousands (Mrs. Browning included) have faith in the rapping imposture, and that several episcopal clergymen vouch for the false dauphin.

The book in fashion is a volume of poems by Alexander Smith.[1] A number of extracts from these poems were sent to me a year and a half ago, and this book is just like those extracts printed together without any sort of correction—a mass of powerful metaphor with scarce any lattice-work for the honeysuckles to climb upon—of the worst school too, the obscure and the unfinished, but he is young and may do better.

I have at last procured the ballad of which the refrain is "Chez l'ambassadeur de France."[2] I have been suffering much, but am again somewhat better.

I have written about your book to the Palace.

Miss Mitford to John James Ruskin.[3]

[1853.]

Not being sure whether Mr. John Ruskin is in England, I write to you, dearest Mr. Ruskin, knowing how entirely you are one in heart, and how very frequent is your intercourse, to acknowledge the receipt of his beautiful volume[4] arrived

[1] A Scottish poet who published, in 1853, "Life Drama and Other Poems," a volume that made a sensation.

[2] See note, p. 234. [3] Father of John Ruskin.

[4] "Stones of Venice," the third and last volume of which was published in 1853.

this morning. I thank him for it from the bottom of my heart. People are a great deal too good to me, many people, but none so very good and kind in a thousand ways as those who bear the name of Ruskin. Of course I have not yet had time to read—but this new volume is poetry to the sight—never were representations of stones so resolved into beauty—so traced up to the leaves and flowers which are the loveliest works of God—so made to expound and to preach the holiness and virtue which art in its perfection ought to teach. Genius is a great gift, my dear Mr. Ruskin, a great trust—and it would be difficult to find a writer who has so worthily exercised his noble powers. One of the best symptoms of the age is the recognition of the works so high in aim and so perfect in execution. It is a privilege to be honoured by the friendship of John Ruskin! . . .

You will be sorry to hear that the accident of last December,[1] falling as it did upon a subject already terribly affected by rheumatism, has left ill effects, which threaten to be permanent. For twenty-two weeks I was merely wheeled from the bed to the fireside, never leaving my room—and although since the middle of May I have been lifted from step to step downstairs, sometimes into my little pony-chaise, sometimes under an acacia-tree at the corner of the house, the strength which was expected from the air does not come. I can neither

[1] See p. 228.

walk nor stand nor rise from my seat—cannot get out of my little carriage at a friend's house, so great are the difficulties—am still lifted into bed and cannot turn when there. The medical people say that Bath or Brighton might do good—but the hope is faint and the fatigue certain—and fatigue I can so little encounter that the delight of exciting conversation leaves me sleepless and exhausted for a week. So that resignation is my wisest course —at all events for the present.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

July 6, 1853.

I begin by answering your kind questions about my health. The terrible want of power in the limbs which rheumatism began, and this bad accident has so grievously augmented, does not yield in the least to the change of season. They get me down step by step to the pony-chaise, and that getting down stairs is in itself a most painful, difficult, and tedious operation, and then I am driven at a foot pace through the lanes. If I attempt more I am so sore all over the body that for two or three days afterwards it is as if I had been pounded in a mortar, and company—the pleasanter the worse—has exactly the same effect as a quick drive. Nothing does for me but absolute quiet. Still Mr. May thinks that the open air may make me a little stronger by and bye, and I am looking

for an old-fashioned garden chair (not a Bath chair) in which I may be drawn under a tree during the warm afternoons. One bad effect of this weakness is that I see few people and write as few letters as I can help—for always I am tormented and pursued by quantities of persons who will write to me, persons whom I never saw or heard of, about their own books and their own poems. It was only yesterday that I received a modest request to edit a novel from a person who had no more right to ask me such a thing than she could have had to make the same request to you. Well, as I was about to say, one bad effect of this privacy is that I see few people to ask about your book. Young James Payn, a splendidly handsome lad of twenty-three, who used to be one of my means of hearing that sort of news, which gives tidings not merely of books but of their success, is gone to the Lakes to finish a volume of poems which will be very striking, and to try to regain his health, for he has been during the winter at death's door, and is exactly the charming lad that so often goes off in consumption —full of beauty, mental and physical, and with a sensibility and grace of mind such as I have rarely known. He has been for three years at Trinity College, Cambridge, and his opinion about sending Alexander Smith to the University is exactly mine. It is a place full of dangers. He may kill himself as Kirke White[1] and Herbert

[1] 1785–1806. He died of over-work at Cambridge.

Photo] [*W. & D. Downey.*

JAMES PAYN.

To face p. 250.

Knowles[1] did, by trying to overtake those who had the advantage of early training and a classical ground-work seldom efficiently acquired after twenty; or he may join an idle set, or he may head a troop of admirers, blind idolaters, and lose all future power in self-admiration—perhaps this last destiny would be the most fatal to his talent of all. The healthiest thing for him would be a plunge into the business and bustle of life. My friend, Mr. Bennoch, the cleverest man that I have ever known, is at the head of a great commercial house, does every day the work of another man's year, will be in Parliament whenever he likes, has already made a large fortune, and writes here and there in railway carriages or anywhere, lyrical poetry that has nothing finer in the language, and this at forty-two or forty-three. He told me that your book had been well received, speaking generally; so did James Payn, so did Mr. Bennett, so did dear Mr. Pearson, instancing the "Spectator," a far more influential paper than the cold ungenial "Athenæum." My own opinion of it is fixed and unalterable. It is a little too long for this impatient age, and perhaps would have been more immediately popular if it had been more dashing and Cumming-like, and less true. But I defy any one to read it fairly without making acquaintance with a whole set of new scenes, new people, and new manners; and this is just the effect that should be produced by

[1] 1798–1817. Also died at Cambridge.

such a subject, to say nothing of its development of the author's personal character.

I began this as soon as I received yours, but was interrupted, and it is now the 26th of June. When the weather lets me (for we have a wet, cold, showery summer), I sit at the corner of my little dwelling, under a superb acacia-tree, laden just now with as many showy tassels as leaves. What a graceful tree the acacia is! waving its delicate foliage, and bending to every breeze like drooping feathers; just underneath it is a dark syringa, with its ivory blossoms—the English orange flower in look and in odour. You know, I believe, my love of sweet scents (I can even accept perfumes when I cannot get flowers), and can imagine how much I delight in this mingled fragrance of the syringa and the acacia. Almost all the very fragrant flowers are white—the violet, the narcissus, the cyclamen, the orange, the thousand fruit blossoms, the jessamine, the hyacinth, the Provence rose, the pink, the tuberose, the gardenia, the magnolia—oh, I could never be able to count them all. My love of fragrant flowers brought me last night a singular visitor.

When putting me to bed K. broke into a variety of exclamations, pointing all the while to the candlestick. Looking as she directed, I saw there a dark-looking caterpillar. It moved, and there was the reflection of a tiny green light. It was a glow-worm. On the table were jars of pinks and roses,

and there had been a jar of wild honeysuckle. Doubtless the insect had dropped from the flowers. After some consultation we extinguished the candle, and Sam deposited the candlestick on the turf in front of the house. Ten minutes after, the glow-worm had crawled to the grass, I hope to live out its little life in peace and comfort. Was it not strange? K., who knows my old love for those stars of the earth, says that now I cannot go to them they come to me.

You see the "Athenæum," I think, and will have doubtless been interested by Mr. Collier's curious annotated folio copy of Shakespeare, which he ha almost traced to the old library at Upton Court. I wrote to him about a week ago to tell him that my friend Miss Ellen Cowslede, whose aunt, Mrs. Selwin (Christopher Smart's daughter), was so much with the old priest who lingered in the deserted mansion after everybody else had abandoned it, was the most likely person to tell him of the fate of the book. In his answer, which was most gracious, he told me that he had just lost one daughter by consumption, and another was given over with the same complaint. I think that terrible disease is prevailing more than ever. I heard the other day from Lady Richardson, wife of the Arctic traveller,[1] and daughter of Mrs. Fletcher, Wordsworth's friend. Did you see her when at Rydal? I do not know her. Also the

[1] Sir John Richardson (1787–1865).

Baroness Sternberg, who has a fine place on Windermere, writes to me and I heard the other day of Harriet Martineau—all neighbours.

July 24, 1853.

Thank you again and again for the deep interest you show in my health, and all the trouble you take to further my amendment. This year a journey to Wildbad is quite out of the question. If we had but a little dry weather, perhaps I might grow stronger; for it is total want of power that is my worst symptom, or, rather, my worst disease. They say that air is the best tonic for my case, and I get out when I can, but we have hardly had a dry day this summer, as the hay can tell. I have only once smelt that delicious odour of new hay, in spite of all the waggons that pass our house, and all the meadows through which we drive when we can get out. But there must be some change, and it can hardly fail of being for the better. What is likely to fix me here is this: my friend, Mr. Bennoch, has set his very heart and soul on my publishing a collected edition of my dramatic works —the plays and the dramatic scenes. Now three of these tragedies, never acted, had been sent to Colburn to be printed with some prose stories, originally in Finden's Tableaux some years ago. Any day they might have been done, but I put it off, and now Colburn has retired from business. So I wrote a very humble letter, knowing that it was

my fault, and asking if they had still the manuscripts, and would send them to Mr. Bennoch. The next day Colburn called, and told Mr. Bennoch that he had reserved an interest in two or three works, this especially, and then Mr. Bennoch proposed that they should publish the two works separately—the dramatic works first in the long days—then the other (of which there will be a volume to be written) in the long evenings. All is not quite settled, because Mr. Hurst (Colburn's successor) is out of town, but I suppose it will be so, and I must try for strength to do my part. I always expected the tragedies to be published after my death, and it seems like an anachronism to bring them out before.

July 28, 1853.

I have been reading with absorbing interest Haydon's life. It is a most painful and most fascinating book, and people who knew far less of him than I, seem to feel it equally. It makes Moore's life, always frivolous, seem rags and tinsel in the comparison. Mr. Taylor has done his work admirably, as concerns the living, and as giving a most characteristic picture of the dead. But considering that there were twenty-nine folio volumes of journals, closely written, ledger-like books, and that one of the three published octavos is filled with autobiography distinct from them, it seems to me he might have omitted the prayers and the

bitter spite against the sitters. He of course wished to give a complete portrait, and he has done so.[1] The man always reminded me of Benvenuto Cellini, and the book has the same character. I had forgotten the sonnet of mine which is included, and thought, till I saw it, that it was the earlier one inserted in the Dramatic Scenes.

Did I tell you that on the Thursday before his death, sending some things to be taken care of by Miss Barrett, he sent my portrait (a head cut out of a great picture larger than life, over-coloured but strangely like) as a present; then called and said he would only leave it as a loan—on Tuesday he killed himself. There is no mention of that episode of my portrait in the book (I dare say Mr. Taylor did not know it), and I cannot tell what has become of it.[2]

I have been seeing a great deal of the Kingsleys lately. Charming people! He is not the least Alton Lockeish, but a frank, cordial, high-bred gentleman, and she just fit for a poet's wife. Do you know him? He says that he certainly either knows personally or has heard much of a Charles Boner, a very handsome dark man—living amongst German

[1] In a letter to A. H. Clough (November 22, 1853) Charles Eliot Norton writes, àpropos of Taylor's book: "What a mistake the English are making in taking Haydon so much at his own estimate and blaming themselves (with a self-accusation which has a tone of self-laudation in it) for not better appreciating 'high art.'"

[2] See p. 53.

princes—a great scholar in many ways, and he thought author of "Chamois Hunting," etc. But then, that Charles Boner was originally of Edinburgh, and had three sisters, great beauties, very dashing, and one of them married to some celebrated man. I told him that my friend, to whom the first part of the description applied exactly, was born at Bath, and educated for the most part in Devonshire, and that I had only heard of one excellent sister, whom I believed to be single. I mystified him exceedingly. I let him see what you say of the German poets, and then we talked of Poe.

If you know Charles Kingsley you are not likely to forget him, for he is a man after your own heart; who would go chamois hunting himself if he could, as manly a creature as ever lived, and as gentle and courteous as manly men commonly are. He is seven or eight miles off unluckily, but does not mind it to come here, which is a great comfort to me.

Alfred Tennyson was with him lately, much softened and improved by the birth of his child. They are looking for a house near her friends, but would come here, Mr. Kingsley thinks, if we could find him a habitation. I should like that much. We are expecting Hawthorne every day. He sent me word the day after his landing at Liverpool, and he and his friend Mr. Ticknor (the great publisher of Boston, partner of my friend Mr. Fields) are only

waiting dear Mr. Bennoch's leisure to come here with him and his wife. Mr. Ticknor's coming this year keeps dear Mr. Fields in America, but it is only fair that the other should come, and next year, if I be spared, we shall see that beloved friend. I wonder whether Hawthorne will talk or no! They say that for the most part he is perfectly silent, grave, shy, almost morose, with brilliant but very rare half-hours. Well! if anybody can bring him out it will be Mr. Bennoch and Mr. Kingsley. They are frankness itself. What a nice letter was the Prince of Leiningen's! Our Queen's half-brother, is he not? and how entirely you have earned the pleasure you will enjoy. It must be very gratifying to find your work so appreciated by those who know best.

September 19, 1853.

This will be a very shabby letter, because until I shall have completed my story, probably not till next May or June, I can write none but the shortest of notes; indeed, unless to distant friends, I have given notice that I cannot write at all. You must understand that I have a long tale, almost a novel,[1] to write, and that the Plays and Dramatic Scenes will occupy two very thick volumes. All that I have yet done is to correct the proofs of perhaps half a volume, and finish the writing of the preface—

[1] "Atherton and Other Tales," published early in 1854.

fifty pages of letter-press probably, and more completely an autobiography than all the "Recollections" put together. If it please God to spare my life and intellects, I shall certainly give another series of "Recollections" when these two works are completed. Mr. Bentley counts upon it, and I get letters about it every day. The selections are so wanted for forming the taste of young persons, and there will, of course, be a mixture of other papers.

I hope that long before this reaches you your attack of rheumatism will have vanished. Are you doing too much in the way of exercise? I am convinced that I did, and even strength and youth will not stand against over-exertion. My own state is just as when last I described it to you—lifted up and down stairs and borne along upon level ground, and what is worst of all, unable to turn in bed when lifted there. I earnestly hope that you are before this time quite recovered, and that you have been able to enjoy the sport you love so well, with your princely host.[1] What you tell me of your plan for a series of pictures of past German life is excellent. I think no work would be more likely to succeed. You must make it as rapid and vivid as possible.

"Bracebridge Hall" was a little unreal and a little long. Being himself a copy, Washington Irving is a bad model. The most amusing books

[1] Boner was on a visit to Prince Leiningen.

of that sort have been real. "The Memoirs of the Margravine of Bayreuth," and Thiébault's gives a capital account of Frederick the Great and his Court. Have you met with Sainte-Beuve's "Causeries du Lundi," the Monday feuilletons of the "Constitutionelle," now by the admirable taste of my Emperor transferred to the "Moniteur"? I recommended them as a model to Mr. Willmott, the principal critic of the "Times," and he is certainly following my advice; as, if you see the "Times," you will perceive. Nothing can be better than his late articles, rich, varied, and elegant, as fit for a series of volumes as for a newspaper. Do pursue your notion of old German life. It will be amusing, and you will have no rival in English literature.

I will be sure to tell Mr. Kingsley what you say. It cannot but please him. It is very odd that young James Payn, who arrived to-day about two hours after your letter, brought me a very fine print of him. These coincidences are commoner than they seem. James Payn's new volume will be very fine; he has been to Scotland and the lakes this year, where Harriet Martineau talked over *the* book with him, exculpating Mrs. Atkinson; and the glorious old Mr. De Quincey confessed that he was miserable from nerves and compelled to have recourse to a partial inebriation from opium. *He* (De Quincey) talks of coming to this neighbourhood, which seems almost too good to hope

for, his conversation being the finest of the world.

Accidentally I have just seen a capital review of "Chamois Hunting" in "Bell's Weekly Messenger" for April 28th. It was a fragment in which some books were folded, and which Sam [1] brought to me, knowing the interest I took in your success. It was very nice in him, was it not? He is a great reader himself, especially of newspapers.

Since beginning this letter I have been applied to for Haydon's letters, and had to look over five great boxes, trunks, and chests, two huge hampers, baskets innumerable, and drawers without count. I discovered sixty-five, mostly very long. I have no doubt but I have still many more, but being almost blinded by the search, shall not trouble myself farther. That correspondence (if he wrote to

[1] Samuel Swetman, Miss Mitford's servant. In a letter to Ruskin (December 24, 1854) she gives the following account of him:

"His father was kennel-man to Sir John Cope's hounds—a menial servant—at whose death the good old Baronet sent his whole establishment four miles to attend the funeral, putting on mourning himself for the day—and whose seven children, one daughter and six sons, have all turned out equally respectable. That homely name is a warrant for good character and good conduct, in a station a little above the father's—head groom for instance in a nobleman's family, or head coachman, or upper Whip at twenty-four who will be Huntsman. I am proud of Sam's pedigree. He came to me for three weeks to drive my pony-chaise—and partly from liking for me and partly from love of K., [her name was Kerenhappuch] has staid seven years."

many people as he did to me) will be a most interesting work. My contribution will, I should think, make a long volume. Have you seen the "Life"? It had an immense success here; the greatest of the year.

1854

January 30, 1854.

First let me very sincerely and heartily wish you all the health, and happiness, and prosperity, which can be hoped for in this world, and many years in which to enjoy those blessings.

You are so good as to desire to hear from me, but my letters are necessarily bulletins of my own most wretched health. I have now been two months shut up in my own room, get with exceeding difficulty from the bed to the fireside, unable to stir either in bed or in my chair, but much more comfortable in the chair than in bed; and here I must remain, I suppose, till May, when, if there be anything like summer weather, I may be lifted downstairs and into the pony-chaise.

Of course I see nobody, and have done all I can to discourage people from writing to me—writing being most painful to me, as well as most troublesome, from rheumatic pains in the chest, so that I have very little news of any sort. The charming Margaret De Quincey (eldest daughter of the opium eater) has married a Scotch neighbour of the name

of Craig, who has bought lands in Ireland, and is going to live in Tipperary. Henry Hope (eldest son of Thomas Hope) has bought a great estate there—Castle Blayney. They will not desert the Deepdene, of course, but £80,000 a year, kindly spent, must do good to Irish peasants.

You see the "Times."—Did you read the admirable evidence on the London Corporation by my friend Francis Bennoch? Nothing out of Parliament ever made so great a sensation. He has been to Paris since, and says that not only in beauty but in perfect drainage, supply of water and work-people's habitations, Louis Napoleon has done in two years all that we have been talking about and have not done in twenty. Tell me anything you hear of this great man. Dr. Arnold's son (Matthew Arnold) has published another volume of poems,[1] which has shown considerable ability. Young poets swarm just now. I have a dear young friend who has just left Trinity College, Cambridge, and will be nothing else; a thousand pities, for he is a younger son and a charming young man, and to make the matter still worse he is going to be married. Have you seen Dr. Doran's book? It is amusing enough, but too long.

I rejoice at what you told me of your book. One of the pleasantest sporting writers—Mr. St. John—is lately dead, so is his half-brother. Both

[1] "Poems" (containing "Sohrab and Rustum," "Scholar-Gipsy," etc.), 1853.

were sons of the Honourable General St. John, whose widow is an old friend of mine. Her son (not the author) killed himself by his own folly. Last year all the young men at Brighton used to walk on the cliff, smoking cigars, after leaving the ballroom at four o'clock in the morning. This young man, with the seeds of consumption in him, died, of course.

Think of your book on old German customs. It will be curious, and get it as close as you can, lively and full. A little tendency to length is your danger. But you may be sure that the "Chamois Hunting" has made a most favourable impression, especially on those whose good opinion you would most desire.

March 7, 1854.

I thank you heartily for your affectionate sympathy, and although I write with exceeding pain and difficulty (for except the daily growing weaker there is little change in my condition), I yet write to say that Mr. Fields is expected in England this spring, and that if you will write me such a letter as you would like him to see, it shall—if I be still alive—be put in his hands, together with "Chamois Hunting," and whatever I can say by way of good opinion of the writer. K.'s little boy is not to go to America till he is fourteen, and the house is not at New York but at Boston—Messrs. Ticknor, Reid and Fields, one of the greatest houses in the

world.[1] I also know Mr. Ticknor—an admirable man. You can write to him if you like, only Mr. Fields is coming. I thought you ought to know this.

Of course my books have been reprinted over and over again in America. Even a superb collected edition with four of the tragedies, in Philadelphia.

Yes, *my* Emperor is indeed a man to be proud of. Tell me anything you hear of him, or of his sweet wife. I suppose the Countess Tascher de la Pagerie is now in Paris. Those papers are admirable. It is delightful to see the solemn coxcomb Guizot, and the little scamp Thiers, so completely put aside, and the governments and courts who held to one another's rottenness forced to come round. Can anybody depend on Austria and Prussia, especially the latter?

March 24, 1854.

I write only one line to tell you that Mr. Fields is expected here in May. I don't know at what time in the month. He will be to be heard of at Francis Bennoch's, Esq., 77, Wood Street, Cheapside; the time to find Mr. Bennoch there being from one to two o'clock at luncheon. He lives at Blackheath Park. I tell you this lest your poor old friend should be gone before May. Mr. Bennoch

[1] See p. 217.

is expected here soon, and I shall do all I can to interest him in the cause, and put into his hands the "Chamois Hunting," and your two last letters.

Thank you for your admirable character of the Emperor and the King of Prussia. You are right as to our national ignorance of our nearest neighbours. But this ministry—especially Lord Aberdeen—seems to be quite imbecile. There is no hope but in the French and the English people.

I have had a great shock in the death of poor Judge Talfourd.[1] He had spent two hours at my bedside about a fortnight before, and being much affected at the state in which he saw me, all the old friendship came back upon us both, as in the many years when my father's house was a second home to him. We both, I believe, felt it to be a last parting, though neither dreamed which thread of the cord would be so soon parted.

You cannot doubt how glad I should be to see you once again, though I am only equal to seeing any one from one to two hours a day.

Correcting the proofs of "Atherton" has almost killed me. The other stories (reprinted from annuals) I have not attempted to look at. I suppose both "Atherton" and the "Dramatic Works" will soon be out.

[1] Died March 13, 1854.

Ruskin read, liked, and highly praised "Atherton." Writing to her he said: "I have just finished 'Atherton,' to my great regret, thinking it one of the sweetest things you have ever written, and receiving from it the same kind of refreshment which I do from lying on the grass in spring." It was warmly received by the public. Miss Mitford had taken great pains with it, writing each page three times over.

Miss Mitford to John Ruskin.

April 11, 1854.

Ah, my dear Mr. John Ruskin, you never would dream of accusing yourself as you do if you knew all I think of you. Next to your dear father I think you are kinder to me than anybody in the world, and I owe his goodness to you. I cannot talk of either without the tears coming into my eyes. Your liking "Atherton" will be the highest gratification to me. The printers failed just after they began—nearly a month was lost in finding another, and at last it was driven through the press at the rate of 100 pages a day—nearly killing me and causing errata out of number—for the proofs came to me without ever having been read over at the office.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

May 24, 1854.

It is so difficult to contrive to send Sam into Reading, I myself wanting him so constantly, that I send this unpaid by our village post. I hope it will reach you. I am much as before, a little better perhaps of the pain under the arms and over the heart, but no stronger, and still confined as before to one motionless position in bed, and another when lifted out into my arm-chair. I shall, however, rejoice to see you. You must not come even to the house before three or four o'clock. It oversets me for many days to do so. Indeed very few persons are admitted at all. Let me know when you come. Of course K. will get you dinner. If you like children you will be charmed with our little girl.

"Atherton" is a most extraordinary success. It was met by the whole press with enthusiasm, the "Athenæum" being the only cold notice, as it is the only one of which I know the writer; and not only did it go in five weeks into a second edition, but the fashion for it is such that Mr. Mudie told my publisher, Mr. Hurst, last week he had four hundred copies in circulation, and could not do with less. I requested my friend, Mr. Bennoch, to keep a copy for you. He read two of your letters, and was much struck with them, and desired

me to say that he would gladly take your message for Mr. Fields, in case of your not coming to England. Mr. Fields was to have arrived at Liverpool on Friday last, but has deferred his voyage for a month, so you will meet. In the meantime, pray call at Mr. Bennoch's house of business. You will find him a very remarkable man in every way, and full of kindness. I hope you will get this letter, but that Reading post office is wretched.

Charles Boner paid Miss Mitford a visit in June—indeed, he came to England a year before he intended in order to see her once again. The excitement and the exertion of talking with him brought on such exhaustion and so terrible a struggle for breath that her servants thought Miss Mitford was dying. But she made a wonderful rally, and her interest in books and in her fellow-creatures was keen to the end.

Thursday Night,
[*June*, 1854].

You will be sorry, I know, but not angry with me for writing this letter. It is indeed necessary that it should be written, painful as it is to us both. I was so glad to see you, and so excited by your

conversation that the fatigue and the exhaustion were in proportion to the excitement, and on being lifted into bed the gasping for breath which now attends every exertion, became such a struggle that both K. and Sam thought me dying. This was followed by sickness and low fever. I am still suffering from the exertion, and must not risk a repetition. I have just written to the oldest friend in the world, requesting him not to come here, and I must make the same request of you. Let me know how you speed with royalty, and with that other royalty the booksellers, and all that interests you, for be very sure that I shall not lose my strong interest in you while consciousness remains. I take for granted you are not at Oxford. I write to Mr. Bennoch to ask him to procure for you a copy of "Atherton."

Be very sure that I have never for one moment ceased to recognize that the fault of your staying a little too long with me was exclusively mine. You were most considerate. Perhaps, however, the real fault lay in the great pleasure that your coming gave me, which is a delinquency that we neither of us wish less, for certainly there are very few whom I more sincerely love, esteem, and respect, or whose future destiny interests me more. I hope and believe that it will be bright and peaceful, such as a youth of virtuous activity has earned.

To-day brought me a most interesting letter from Mr. Kingsley. His sweet wife, the only realization of my idea of a poet's wife that I have ever seen, has had a dangerous relapse. She is now better, and her excellent husband is about to move her to a pretty place that he has taken in the north of Devon.[1] He does not come to Eversley till August, when, if I still be spared, I shall see him. My breath has been a little relieved by strengthening and stimulating medicine, as much champagne and nourishment as K. can coax down, and the most absolute quiet. Even Lady Russell only stays five minutes.

I have not heard one word of Mr. Fields. It is really most singular. This silence has lasted three months, and the last letter I received was dated February, and had evidently been long tossed about. I know you will let me know all that interests you, especially if the rifle improvement carry you to St. Cloud.

Thursday, June 27, 1854.

After becoming still more exhausted, so that on Saturday Mr. May was so far alarmed as to write himself to Mr. Harness not to come, but to keep away, I am for the moment a little revived by champagne and highly stimulating medicine, and perhaps still more by a quietness all about me,

[1] Near Bideford.

which to one so excitable is the most needful of all. I am so sorry to know that you are in England and yet not to have the pleasure of another interview, but it would be grief to you, whose kindness I so well know, to shake the last sands in the hour glass. I wait anxiously for to-morrow's letter, but I send this to-day to say that if Mr. Fields should arrive before your departure, and if I (as is very likely) should be too ill to suffer him to come, I am quite sure that you might depend on my good friend Mr. Bennett to transmit any message you might wish. He is a person of the most perfect good faith. Remember that I gave into Mr. Bennoch's hands the copy of the "Chamois Hunting" which you gave me to be transmitted to Mr. Fields. Because the remainder of these letters was cheerful as usual, you none of you realized the idea of so total a failure of strength and power. He was to have come to see me with Mr. Fields, and if I am obliged to put off the latter I should earnestly desire him to know that my latest feelings towards himself were those of affection and of gratitude for many kindnesses. Of Mr. Fields I have heard nothing these three months, nor indeed of Mr. Bennoch except by an Oxford paper, which I wonder at his sending. How could he expect you to join such a party! Poor Lockhart. It is just what I heard of him at ——. A friend of mine who is intimate with Croker, wrote to me the other day that he had been to see him. His pulse

in the morning had been twenty-four! But his faculties were as keen as ever.

July 5, 1854.

With your kind and interesting letter to-day came one of remarkable beauty from Mr. Tom Taylor, to whom I had written about my letters to Haydon. The plan of publishing them is given up—I mean the correspondence altogether. Sir Charles Eastlake would not give Haydon's letters to him. No wonder! The Life had shown his base ingratitude already, and there was a great fear then that those of Wilkie would also be withheld by *his* representatives. I am glad of this, and very glad of Mr. Taylor's letter.

I shall be most anxious to hear more of your rifle invention. No doubt you are a better judge in such matters than many men in the army. I remember how instant and true some of the shots were in your charming book—it cannot but add to your reputation in every way. The Emperor Louis Napoleon would be capable of appreciating such an improvement. I have only read the preface to his "History of Artillery," but that is charming. I have letters to-day from Mr. Bennett and Mr. Bennoch, both full of your praise.

In the autumn of 1854 Walter Savage Landor sent Miss Mitford the following poem:

The hay is carried ; and the Hours
Snatch, as they pass, the linden flowers ;
And children leap to pluck a spray
Bent earthward, and then run away.
Park-keeper, catch me those grave thieves,
About whose frocks the fragrant leaves
Sticking and fluttering, here and there,
No false nor faltering witness bear.

I never view such scenes as these
In grassy meadow, girt with trees,
But comes a thought of her who now
Sits with serenely patient brow
Amid deep sufferings. None hath told
More pleasant tales to young and old.
Fondest was she of Father Thames,
But rambled in Hellenic streams ;
Nor even there could any tell
The country's purer charms so well
As Mary Mitford.

Verse ! go forth
And breathe o'er gentle breasts her worth.
Needless the task . . . but, should she see
One hearty wish from you and me,
A moment's pain it may assuage—
A rose-leaf on the couch of Age.

The verses naturally gave Miss Mitford very great pleasure. She tells Boner that

the American poet, Parsons, also "addressed" a poem to her. It is not printed in the collected volume of his poems, but he inscribed to Miss Mitford his "Proem to Manzoni's 'Cinque Maggio,'" the ode on the death of Napoleon, and it may be this to which Miss Mitford refers.

July 20, 1854.

Your most interesting letter is just arrived. Thank you for it. I rejoice that you have seen Paris. To me this Napoleon is even a greater man than his uncle. He has not the terrible deduction of the coarser and vulgarer fame belonging to the soldier and the conqueror, and has done what was so difficult, won a second great name in spite of the tremendous rivalry of his predecessor's renown. Moreover, happier than the first Napoleon, he learnt in adversity to command himself. I wish you had seen the Taschers and him.

Mr. Bennoch has undertaken to send you my dramatic works. I hope you will like them. I don't know how many of my plays you have read. At present the taste for the drama is extinct in England, but some day or other it may revive, and then it will be a good thing to have gathered these tragedies together. Perhaps you have already got them. If so, write on the chance of my being still spared to say how you like them.

"Otto" and "Max," which have never been acted, seem to me to be quite as good as "Rienzi," which went one hundred nights. With these volumes he undertook to send two proofs on India paper, one of the engraving from John Lucas's picture, the other of a miniature taken when I was a child.

Mr. Fields was so seized by sea-sickness that he stopped at Halifax and put back to Boston, so neither he nor the Brownings come to England this year. I wrote him a long letter about the "Chamois Shooting." I hope Mr. Bennoch will send him my copy which I gave him for that purpose, but you had better write too, for the Bennochs are going their annual tour this year to the Shetland Isles. Two of my other friends want Mr. Fields to be their publisher—Mr. Willmott and the Brownings. So you will be in good company. I told him as I believe that your book would be equally creditable and profitable. One of the few friends whom I admit spoke of it to me the other day as a work which she had recommended far and wide. She is a sister of Sir W. P. Wood,[1] the new Vice-Chancellor. Mr. Fields says that the success of "Atherton" in America is immense. He says: "The newspapers and periodicals are all outvieing each other in words of praise. No book for many years has been received with such an outburst of applause."

[1] William Page Wood (Baron Hatherley), 1801–81.

Old Mr. Landor sent me yesterday the most beautiful verses, I think, that he has written. I dare say he will print them. I am told too that Dr. Parsons (author of the matchless lines on Dante) has addressed an exquisite poem to me. I have not seen it. We have had three days of intolerable heat which have tried me much.

Authors are often poor judges of their own particular talents, and Miss Mitford, for whom the stage held great fascination, considered that her chief talent lay in tragedy. The publication of her dramatic works in two volumes this year led her to write about her early dramatic career to her correspondents. Her memory sometimes plays her false, and she certainly puts her dramatic reputation far higher than it actually was.

Miss Mitford to John Ruskin.

August 2, 1854.

The sight of your writing does me good. I even think that when your letters and those of your dear father come I have a bright hour.—I am now sitting at the open window inhaling the sweet summer air—a jar of roses inside the window-sill—a perfect sheaf of fresh gathered meadow-sweet sending its almondy fragrance from without—and

JOHN RUSKIN, 1854.

From the painting by Sir J. E. Millais in the possession of Admiral Sir William Dyke Acland.

(By kind permission of the owner and Messrs. George Allen & Co., Ltd.)

To face p. 278.

although too deeply sunken in my chair to look down on the flower beds in my little court yet with the blue sky and the green trees, and a bit of road and the distant harvest-fields for a prospect. God is very merciful to give me thus to the last the enjoyment of His works—and such a friend with whom to talk (for we are talking) of that enjoyment. How good you are to me in every way! I have such a delight in the drama that I have not for a long while looked forward to any book[1] with so much pleasure as that which you promise me.

And yet the drama is a strange transitory thing —transitory even in the reputation that it brings— a reputation which can be effaced as a child wipes its writing from a slate—substituting another word —perhaps to last little longer. Thirty years ago, after many volumes of "Our Village" had been published, I was far better known as a dramatist than as a prose writer. All the four Tragedies that have been acted had a real success—three of them far beyond the average—and "Rienzi" greater than perhaps any tragic play (except "Virginius" and "William Tell") of the present century. It was performed above a hundred nights at Drury Lane Theatre[2] during the two years that Mr. Young

[1] Octave Feuillet's "Scènes et Proverbes."

[2] Produced October 9, 1828, with Young as the hero, and acted thirty-four times. Stanfield painted the scenery. Miss Mitford received £400 from the theatre, and eight thousand copies of the printed book were sold.

remained upon the stage—and went through more editions than I venture to enumerate (I think there were at least ten or twelve during which the little wretched dab of a book was sold at 3s. 6d.). My only reason for leaving a mode of composition I loved so well was the necessity of earning a fixed and certain income—and the terrible uncertainty between managers, actors and licensers of all earnings on the stage. For the rest my plays were and are essentially dramatic—plays to act and not to read—and I am glad to have gathered them together and put them into a correct form, to give them a chance (if ever there be again an English stage) of being produced there. The two that have not been acted, "Inez de Castro" and "Otto of Wittelsbach," may possibly tempt the one a great actress the other a great actor. I do hope that you and dear Mr. Ruskin[1] may like them. Two copies have been sent for you to Denmark Hill.

Forgive this egotism. "Since the three or four hot days and a thunderstorm" which Horace Walpole says constitute an English summer and which nearly killed me, I am somewhat revived—that is I am kept up by nourishment every two or three hours—beef-tea, blancmange, sole, whiting, champagne and water (at the rate of a tablespoonful to a dose) as often as they can pour it down my throat.

[1] Ruskin's father.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

September 5, 1854.

I am delighted at your liking the engraving (a very bad one) from Mr. Lucas's fine picture. The other was a miniature of me at three years old, and is certainly a most attractive and nicely executed little portrait. I am so glad you have them. But you will find the true portrait of my mind in the Tragedies and the Dramatic Scenes. I have not in the preface told any part of the real story of these plays. The fact was that, by the terrible uncertainty of the acted drama, and other circumstances, I was driven to a *trade* when I longed to devote myself to an *art*. Read those plays attentively and study their construction, and you will, I think, see that *that* was my vocation. Indeed the success of "Rienzi"[1] was something unprecedented upon the, at that time, modern stage; and in "Foscari"[2] (much better acted) ladies used to be carried out fainting and in hysterics. At all events I have now rescued these plays from the misprints of Cumberland (who preferred to copy the blunders of the actors instead of the words of

[1] See p. 279.

[2] Produced at Covent Garden, November 4, 1826, with Charles Kemble as the hero, and acted fifteen times. Miss Mitford declared that her play was written and presented to Covent Garden before the publication of Byron's drama "The Two Foscari" (1821).

the author), and the new plays from the dangers of MS. Everybody says that the two new tragedies, "Inez de Castro" and "Otto of Wittelsbach," are amongst the best, the latter perhaps the very best; and, come a great actor or a great actress, you will see them acted. The preface was written this time last year. I do not think that people have a right to give pain, and therefore I have abstained from stating any particulars that must have done so. Tell me when you have read these plays how you like them. I may be gone when your letter arrives, but there is a chance of my still surviving; perhaps only a small one, but still a possibility. Although I know I am in my death sickness and may sink any day, yet for the last week there has been a rally, not making any real change, but still an amelioration, for which I am thankful. I am wasted to skin and bone, but the present treatment of such cases amongst the highest practitioners is admirable. Casting away arrowroot and jellies and all such trash, where there is a large bulk and little nourishment, they give extracts of game and turtle soup, small quantities of the most nutritious food. For instance, I take in the morning half a tea-cup full of grouse soup, and in the evening the same quantity of turtle prepared for the sick at the London Tavern, with old cognac and water, and stimulating medicines between. I have heard of many persons kept alive for months by turtle-soup, the lightest and most nourishing of all food, but this I do not

expect. I thought you would like to know all about me.

We have seldom, I think, spoken of religion. I always firmly believed in the Divine Mission, but I used to worry myself about the manner of it. This long visitation, however, has been, I firmly believe, sent in mercy to draw me closely to Him. I have read the whole of the New Testament through once, the Gospels twice, and am now going through them again for the third time; and I feel that, the mystery being above our finite faculties, the only way is to take it exactly as it is written, and throw ourselves on the mercy of God through the great Mediator.

I have a most dear friend, Hugh Pearson, now travelling in Switzerland with his bosom friend, Arthur Stanley,[1] author of the "Life of Dr. Arnold." Hugh Pearson is exactly a younger Dr. Arnold himself. He administered the sacrament to me before he went, and if I be spared will again on his return, a fortnight or three weeks hence. I have another most dear friend, my oldest and my best, the distinguished London clergyman, William Harness; him I also expect, although he be now at the princely demesne which Mr. Hope has just purchased in Ireland. I tell you this because you will like to hear it. So much for my unworthy self. Mr. Fields says in the postscript of a letter just

[1] Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815–81), afterwards Dean of Westminster.

arrived, "'Chamois Shooting' has been published here." This is every word. I have written to him desiring him to write to you himself and to give you the particulars.

October 2, 1854.

I answer you myself, because both K. and Sam hate writing to their betters, and they do so much for me that I do not like to encroach on their willingness; but my letter cannot be long because I have so very, very many to write every day, and the writing at all is, I know, so bad for me, that I avoid the task as much as possible. This avowal must make you pardon me for not sending your poems to Mr. Kingsley. He is in Devonshire, not at Torquay, but at some other place in the northern part of the county which he has taken for the summer. I do not know his address. We see each other when he comes to look after his curate, and we hear of each other, but we do not correspond. He is overwhelmed with business, and I wonder that your knowledge of the world has not taught you that people who write verse themselves are precisely those who care least about the verses of other persons. The very last time he was here he pulled out a packet of slips just arrived from another friend of mine which he had not read, and evidently did not intend to read. So if he came here now, I, from sincere regard for you, should abstain from putting yours into his hand.

Well, before quitting this authorship question, I must tell you that Mr. Fields wrote me word that "Chamois Shooting" had been reprinted in America.

Now as to myself. From the day of your visit, when I had so nearly died, till about a month ago, I continued to grow weaker and weaker, and worse and worse. My death was expected from week to week, from day to day, from hour to hour. Mr. May, however, in spite of his immense practice, of my distance from Reading, and of his bad opinion of the case, did not abandon the stranded ship, but continued to watch the symptoms, and to exhaust every resource of diet and medicine, as if his fame and fortune depended on the result. This union of friendship and skill has prolonged my life, and I am certainly better than a month ago; though still confined to my chair night and day, sitting on a water-cushion, with no other change than from being propped by air-cushions, to having my feet lifted on another chair. It has not been thought safe to risk the exertion of my being lifted into bed. However, I am still alive, although dear Mr. Pearson, after administering the sacrament, took leave of me in this world, on accompanying Arthur Stanley to Switzerland. He is returned, and I am not yet dead. Still the first breeze will probably—certainly (humanly-speaking), carry the withered leaf from the tree, though at present the symptoms are improved. Mr. Bennoch will no doubt let you

know any decided change. I rejoice in what you tell me of yourself, your own good health, your dear sister's recovery, the fortunate expedition of the young princes, and your repeated visit to the Prince of Leiningen. To be his guest a second time proves a very real liking for your society.

I have had all sorts of packets from America, and letters and messages from almost every man of eminence in the literature of that great country. Such letters, such messages, and such notices of my books as show a personal feeling so strong that I wonder how I can have deserved such goodness. "Atherton" is selling enormously. By the way, you have never told me how you like that and the plays. Here and in America "Atherton" is thought my best story. Mr. Fields has had a fine engraving from John Lucas's picture prefixed to the American edition. I hope he will bring some copies when he comes in April. Let me hear anything you know of my Emperor. The Germans seem to lean to Russia.

In her letter to Ruskin in July Miss Mitford made only a casual reference to her serious illness, and in his reply from Geneva (July 29th), he merely says in reference to it: "You do not know how much you have done for me in showing me how calamity may be borne." Evidently

no further letter came from Ruskin, and so Miss Mitford gives him here a detailed account of her illness, its immediate cause, and her present condition. Although much of the ground has been covered in the previous letters to Boner—indeed, some of the phrasing is similar—in her letter to Ruskin is a more intimate and personal note that lends it peculiar interest. Miss Mitford had only now about two months to live, but these long letters—and she wrote many of them—testify to her extraordinary vitality.

Miss Mitford to John Ruskin.

October 2, 1854.

It is so long[1] since I have heard from you or from dear Mr. Ruskin[2] that I cannot help writing to enquire how and where you are and have been. If I love you all—father, mother, and son—so much better than I seem to have a right to do calculating only our personal intercourse, and that only with one, remember, dear friends, that it is your own fault.

[1] The last published letter from Ruskin to Miss Mitford is dated July 29, 1854.

[2] She addresses Ruskin as "My very dear friend," or "My dear Mr. John Ruskin," and his father always as "Mr. Ruskin."

Recollect that for a dozen years or more [1] there has been no benefit so large that you have not conferred it—no attention so little as to be omitted by either. Then to say nothing of books fuller of high and noble thoughts than any that have appeared since the great age of English thinkers over which Milton and Jeremy Taylor shed their light, and to which Cowley and Izaak Walton lent their sweetness, I have received from both father and son such letters as could only be written by men whose minds and whose lives were filled with kindness and purity and holiness. Yes! I have all the right to love you that such knowledge and an ardent gratitude can give —and you will pardon an intrusion that springs from such a source. You would pardon it, I believe, under any circumstances, for I have pleasanter tidings than usual to send you of myself—although I always chose a sunny day for writing to you—a day of sunshine without and within.

Three or four months ago, as I believe I told you, I was lifted into bed after a two hours' visit from a friend who had come from Germany this summer, instead of next, that he might see me once again. He is a most kind and considerate person, but it had been a bad day with me, and the excitement and fatigue of his visit and the subsequent exertion of being lifted from a sitting posture brought on such a struggle for breath as my faithful maid and

[1] Ruskin first went to see Miss Mitford in January, 1847, but he had previously corresponded with her.

her excellent husband took for the last. Since that time I have not ventured on a similar risk, but have sitten day and night in an easy-chair with a water-cushion under me, and no other change than that of being sometimes propped up by air-pillows, and sometimes having my feet lifted on another chair. Let me add that I have had the unspeakable comfort of being wheeled to an open window. I am too much buried in the chair to see into my little flower-court, but I look up to oaks and elms and a graceful acacia waving across the clear blue sky. I saw the riches of this gracious season cleared from the distant harvest fields, carried off in wains laden with such crops as I never remember, overfilling the garners and crowding the rickyards with their plenty—all this I saw, and I still see the clear pool where the cattle are standing seeking the shade of the huge pollards on this sunny October day as they did in sultry August—and like a glimpse of the actual world I see the distant high-road gay with flocks, herds, carriages, horsemen, carts filled with women and men, with shouting boys passing in noisy felicity to a country fair. Very thankful am I for my open window, still more so for the unspeakable Mercy which taking away the meaner pleasures left untouched my sympathies and my affections and even the interest in daily trifles which so much sweetens the healthy joys of common life Well! this window has carried me from my subject.

After taking to my chair somewhere in June, my

strength declined rapidly. I soon found that I was what is called "given over"—and about a month ago I believe that after having long looked for my death from week to week and from day to day they began to expect it from hour to hour—the beloved friend (do you remember him at Oxford?) Hugh Pearson who came to me to administer the sacrament previous to making a short tour in Switzerland with Mr. Stanley (Arthur Stanley, the biographer of Dr. Arnold and of his own excellent father). Hugh Pearson took a solemn tender final leave of me. Mr. Harness, my executor, who is in Ireland with Mr. Hope, sent me the plan of my own humble funeral. I am wasted to a skeleton and was myself afraid to defer answering a note even for one post lest the power should be gone. Mr. May however did not desert the stranded ship. In spite of his immense practice (he tires four pair of horses a day) which gives such value to his time, of my distance from Reading (six miles) and of his own bad opinion of my case he continued to watch the symptoms and to exhaust every resource of diet and of medicine just as if his fame and fortune depended upon the result. This is friendship—is it not? I love Mr. May, who is a most noble character—one to whom it is a pleasure to owe an obligation. He saved my father's life in a case, which happening just before the opening of the Berkshire Hospital, did make his reputation and caused him, an obscure young man, to be chosen Senior Surgeon of that

great establishment. Well! owing under Providence to his skill and his watchfulness, a decided amendment took place in the symptoms. My life has been prolonged to the present moment and the pulse is fuller, the tongue cleaner, and the voice stronger than it has been for four months. No change in my habits has taken place—we have not ventured on the lifting me into bed—or on any alternative as to posture. I still sit night and day on the water-cushion and have no other relief than the alternation of propping up with air-pillows and lifting my feet on another chair. I do not suppose either that any real or abiding improvement has taken place in my condition. I have little doubt but a very mild breeze would shake the withered leaf from the tree.

But in the meanwhile I am better—and for that I am unspeakably thankful to Him whose visitations are mercies. I am afraid that I cling too fondly to life. Much of this amendment is owing to diet. Tell dear Mr. Ruskin [1] that I have been forced to substitute cognac brandy for champagne on account of the latter after doing its work so well producing flatulence—but I am still benefiting by his bounty by taking a glass full of sherry in every dose of grouse or turtle soup. . . . Still, dear friends, there is little doubt but a very slight cause would carry me off in a few hours. Are you likely to be in England? As I am now I can see one friend a day at any time

[1] Ruskin's father.

from 3 o'clock to 5 in the afternoon. Many friends do come to me from London—and it would be such a pleasure. Either you or dear Mr. Ruskin or you and he together. If you were at Denmark Hill—you would not mind my maid's getting you a cutlet—letting us know beforehand. But only if you are at home and can do it without the slightest inconvenience.

It is another good symptom that I have survived a series of American letters which arrived last week, and touched me to the very heart's core. I can hardly think of them now without crying. There were letters or messages from almost every writer of note in the States (certainly from all the poets) and a gleaning of notices (15) on "Atherton." All these letters, all these messages, all these articles speak in one spirit. Many use the words: "Other writers we admire, Mary Mitford we love," and in that vein of personal feeling they go on. The critics here are almost equally cordial—but in America it is one universal outburst—and I am afraid even to talk of the sale so enormous does it appear. This great illness has almost the effect attributed to actual death in awakening kind feeling more than common, for it is an extraordinary fact that in the case of poor Mr. Justice Talfourd not one single copy of his works old or new (and two published after his death had before been only printed for private distribution, and given away

very sparingly), not one single copy had been sold. . . .

Let me add to my bulletin that even when at worst my cheerfulness never failed me; the danger is that I do too much—see too many people—write too many long letters—the other day I wrote ten, and was certainly none the better. But on the whole all these letters of enquiry which load the postman, and the calls of enquiry which sometimes crowd my little court, do me good. Kindness is a most precious medicine. One of those letters was to a clergyman's wife, Mrs. Ouvry, who had just been reading all your writings—she herself is a daughter of Sir George Nicholls the Poor Law Commissioner. Her only brother was indolent, and she went all through the classics up to Æschylus to give him motive to study himself. It is worth while so to charm such a woman.

Monday, October 8, 1854.

I do not write to provoke a reply, but only to tell you that I am all the better for the great happiness of anticipating your visit. . . .

Another reason why I write is to entreat and conjure you to dine at my poor cottage. You must, dear friend—everybody does. You cannot imagine that I should have the folly or the bad taste to offer you anything that would give you the lesser vexation of putting my little household out of

the way. You shall have nothing but a cutlet and a brace of birds, and some of your excellent father's wine. But you must dine here at six o'clock on Wednesday or Thursday, and by so doing and not coming till four you will give me exactly the sort of rest which will enable us to go on talking again for an hour or perhaps two hours afterwards, without fatigue. The first day we will be quite alone—so we will on the second if you prefer it—otherwise I should like to present to you the friend whose spiritual consolation has been so great a comfort to me.[1] He was at Oxford at the time you were there—has I think the finest taste and the largest heart and mind that I have ever known—admires you as you ought to be admired. He is just back from a five weeks' tour in Switzerland with the Stanleys, being so intimate with Arthur Stanley as to see his books through the press, though too faithful a parish priest to be himself an author. But this shall be left to your decision on Wednesday.

October 16, 1854.

You must not fancy that I mean to pelt you with letters, dearest Mr. Ruskin, or to dream of your sending me answers. Your time is too valuable, the precious days of leisure most valuable of all. Yet whilst you send me day after day something to do good to my mind or my body,

[1] Mr. Pearson.

you must submit to pay the tax of receiving a letter to say how thankfully it is accepted—or rather not to say that for I have no words that express the feeling.

"In Memoriam" is honey sweet and full of beauty. It will be a pet book from this hour—although I suspect that I love action better than reflection and would rather have written that vivid bit of the Lady of Shalott, where Lancelot gleams suddenly across the magic mirror, than anything in this thoughtful volume. Still both are charming and it is a book to keep at one's side and I hope to be the better for.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

November 20, 1854.

It is, indeed, one of the most merciful alleviations of this long dispensation that my faculties, such as they are, remain clear and unclouded, my sympathies as warm as ever; that whilst the poor body has been so severely smitten, the head and the heart are untouched. I even retain the healthy interest in every-day things, the common work-a-day doings of this life of ours, which tend so much to lighten and gladden existence. Blessed with this power, it would be strange indeed if I did not feel with and for my friends. I must try to get my book back from Mr. Bennoch (lent him to show Mr. Fields), for that would stand

a far better chance to interest —— than any poetry. I mean the "Chamois Hunting." He being a great fisherman and foxhunter, and probably a good shot, looking more like a weather-beaten sportsman than a clergyman, with the walk peculiar to men who ride much and well, your talk on that subject might interest him certainly; whether your book would is a different matter. I never saw him interested in the slightest degree by any other author, except, indeed, one of his own followers or his own clique, and then only as admiring and helping *him*. He has great kindness and great sympathy with working people, or with a dying friend, but I profess to you I am amazed at the utter selfishness of authors. I do not know one single poet who cares for any man's poetry but his own. In general they read no books except such as may be necessary to do their own writings; that is, to the work they happen to be about, and even then I suspect that they only read the bits they may immediately want. You know the absolute ignorance in which Wordsworth lived of all modern works; and if, out of compliment to a visitor, he thought it needful to seem to read or to listen to two or three stanzas, he gave unhesitating praise to the writer himself, but took especial care not to repeat that praise where it might have done him good—utterly fair and false. So was Talfourd when he thought it needful to repay praise in kind. Only a very

few like Scott and Southey, are above this weak baseness, and these are certainly not the rising men of this day, whatever may be their merits in other respects. The public is the only critic or patron worth propitiating, and you, if writing with rather more life and fire (for those are the points you want), condensing and energising your matter, and making into one volume what you think enough for three, may certainly take an excellent rank as a prose writer. To be a poet you must live, if not wholly in England, yet amongst the English, and there are too many of really fair writers of verse to make the attempt worth while. I am sure that this is sound advice.

I cannot tell you how glad I am that you like the Dramatic Works. That preface is said to be my best bit of prose, has been reprinted in almost every paper in the American States, and over and over again in the English journals. The books are getting gradually into the great private libraries of our large country houses, and of course into all public libraries, so that there they may wait for the chance of some great actor or great actress arising and taking a fancy to them. I agree with you in preferring "Otto of Wittelsbach" to the others. With a real actor it would be far more effective than "Rienzi." The contrast would be so telling, because there are glimpses of tenderness in the first part, and returns of spirit in the last which would humanise the character.

I am so glad that you like it, because if there had been any great sins against old German character or manners, you would of course have been revolted. But, indeed, without any seeking after accurate costume, where there is the dramatic faculty *it comes*. There is an instinct which travellers tell me makes Foscari Venetian, Rienzi Roman, Inez Portuguese. It belongs to the dramatic faculty, and cannot be supplied by imitation. Nothing (except Racine) can be so unlike Euripides as Mr. Justice Talfourd's "Ion," and that play will assuredly not live. It wants toughness of fibre. I find people very enthusiastic about these dramas—I mean people worth pleasing; and have little doubt of the rank they will take, though they may have long to wait for it. A more complete biography than might be made out of that Preface, "Recollections," "Belford Regis," and "Our Village," can hardly be. But the probability is, that my life-long friend and excutor William Harness will collect my letters and make a series of volumes.[1]

Mrs. Browning, to whom at one time (that is to say, for many years) I used to write two or three times a week, always preferred those letters, written in a far more complete abandonment than anything I should do in the way of autobiography, to any of my writings. Professor Tom Taylor meant (from the same impression) to have inserted

[1] He died before he could do this.

all I would have permitted of my letters in Haydon's correspondence, and John Ruskin, to whom I also write with the same *laisser aller*, professes the same opinion. You, to whom I have chiefly written as a sort of English correspondent a letter of news to a friend abroad, can hardly perhaps, judge of these frequent and habitual epistles where the pen plays any pranks it chooses.[1]

I do not know that William Harness has any such intention, but he is a thorough man of letters living in the very highest literary society. Dean Milman and he corresponded when one was at Eton and the other at Harrow. Mrs. Siddons had sittings in the two chapels where he was alternate morning preacher, that she might always hear him. He refused the dedication of "Childe Harold." He got for Sir Walter Scott the place next to his own at the coronation dinner. He was the literary executor to Thomas Hope, and is just now the actual executor of Charles Kemble; having a passion for the drama, which used to make people accuse him of helping me in my plays, whilst they said I helped him in his sermons, neither being true. Only last week he was talking with John Murray about an article on me in the "Quarterly," which J. M. admitted was merited, and which they owed me.

I will now tell you a little literary news. Tom

[1] The difference in tone here described in the letters to Boner and those to Ruskin is very noticeable.

Taylor was the author of the "Punch" verses on the "German Fatherland," reprinted in the "Times." This I hear and believe, but don't quote me as your authority. Mr. Ruskin is giving lectures on ornamenting houses by borders enlarged from those in the illuminated MSS. They are exquisite—I mean the enlarged borders, for he brought them to show me three weeks ago; and so no doubt are the lectures, for he speaks even better than he writes. Mr. Bennoch has refused a requisition to stand for Coventry. Mr. Fields is married to a beautiful New England girl, the daughter of one of the principal physicians of Boston. The Brownings are getting on with their respective volumes. His is a series of lyrics,[1] of which she has only seen a part. Hers is a fictitious autobiography,[2] of which, though four thousand lines are written, she has not shown him a single line.

Poor Lady Russell is ten years older since the battle of the Alma, from suspense and anxiety. Nothing can exceed the mismanagement of the English Government or their folly. The only hope is in the French. The English miscalculated everything, and had not a notion of the power of the enemy. Then look at that idiotism of sending fine ladies to a military hospital! The great surgeons are all indignant.[3]

[1] "Men and Women." [2] "Aurora Leigh."

[3] Miss Mitford was in ignorance of the real facts.

Miss Mitford to John Ruskin.

November 22, 1854.

Your figs arrived last night after post time. You exhaust the vocabulary of gratitude, though not the feeling. Do not send any more of those precious boxes. That was a sick woman's fancy and has been sparingly taken. And now I wonder if I be doing right or wrong in going on—wrong in all the conventionalities—right probably according to my knowledge of you and your excellent father—the motive being of course that what I am about to beg is a part of life—the prescription which interposes between death and me—and that the motive for begging it of dear Mr. Ruskin is the not knowing where to get it in anything resembling the same purity—I mean the sherry, a glass of which taken with my soup (the rest of which is the pure juice of game) every evening. It seems to me that the noble supply which dear Mr. Ruskin sent me has gone rapidly. To be sure friends have been here almost frequently, and when coming from London have dinner, of course—still that most generous allowance seems to me to have gone fast, and wine is not poured down my throat by Mr. May's orders four or five times a day like brandy. Finally, dearest friend, I do beg half a dozen bottles of that sherry. How long ought it to last? I should like to know this.

To-day brought me a letter from dear Dr. Parsons, the writer of those glorious stanzas on Dante, and of a volume which I design for you.[1] You honoured it by liking it much, and I told him so, holding it to be a sin to have the power of giving such pleasure and not to give it. He says, "Remember me to Mr. Ruskin and tell him no night passes in which his name is not mentioned amongst us. Add that his books are largely read and criticised and praised. But this is a land to which architecture has never yet come." From our land architecture is an art which has departed; a lost art until you restore her.

. . . . .

Do come, if not this week next—and give me all the notice you can. I have been very ill since Saturday, but am revived to-day. Still you will not have me long. I can show you how to make the cowslip ball with scarlet geraniums and those we have. Do come.

November 25, 1854.

I have just been reading the report of your lecture in the "Globe," most kindly sent to me for that purpose by Lady Russell, and I have been so much struck with a coincidence between your knowledge and my ignorance that I cannot help writing to you on the subject. One of my delights in my

[1] "Poems," 1854.

poor father's life-time, when that acre of garden behind our little cottage was as closely set with flowers as a meadow is set with grass, was to arrange those flowers in jars, and I always found that the way to make a brilliant spot, a bit of colour that did your heart good, was to make the foundation white. Half-open roses amongst white pinks are delicious both to the scent and the sight. The Duke of Devonshire[1] (almost the only great man whom I know, and who has always been so kind to me that I do not apologise for seeming to boast of his kindness, as I should of any other Duke), once brought me a nosegay composed in the same spirit—about a dozen forced moss-rose buds in the centre, surrounded by some hundred flower-stalks of the lovely lily of the valley, no leaves, and indeed I generally found that leaves of any sort, even the stemmage and stalkage of the lily, dimmed the colour. This bouquet was really ducal in fragrance and beauty, but my common pinks looked as well, perhaps better, with moss-roses or the dear old cottage rose, had a fine spicy odour and the great merit of coming at the same time and lasting for weeks, sometimes for months. Ask your own dear mother to try this next summer. I dare say that little common pink which grows like a weed is not choice enough for her garden, so you must come and fetch some roots from mine. By far the

[1] William George Spencer Cavendish, sixth Duke of Devonshire, 1790–1858.

most georgeous flower-jar that I ever made was of double white narcissus studded with choice ranunculuses, not hanging loose but packed tightly together. White hollyhocks too mixed with others of rich colour either in a tall jar with all their long spikes, for the bud of the hollyhock is beautiful and so is the peculiar green looking like a daisied lawn on a dewy morning—either in that form or the single blossoms laid closely together in a china dish are very bright and gay. So are dahlias, and dahlias look especially well arranged in a china bowl with a wire frame of the same sphere-like form, into which to insert the stalks. It makes a splendid globe of colour. In the autumn the magnolia grandiflora raising its sculpturesque beauty with a border of fuchsias and other gay flowers drooping round it is very graceful, and for a wild nosegay you will find the white water-lily surrounded by the purple willow-herb, the yellow loose-strife, the deep rose-colour of the ragged robin and the exquisite blue of the forget-me-not very imposing. I have seen people wondering that such an effect should be produced by wild flowers. But whether for scent or elegance, nothing can surpass a quantity of the meadow-sweet denuded of its leaves and left to the charm of its feathery lightness and its pearly, creamy tint. Forgive this blotted scrawl, dear friend. It is your fault, or rather that of your lecture, and you may imagine how much I was pleased to find myself right with-

out knowing it. One other thing I must mention: leaves injure the scent of many flowers, syringa denuded of them is really almost the orange blossom; the honeysuckle and mignonette also suffer by their vicinity.

December 18, 1854.

. . . . .

I was sure you would like Mr. Bennoch. He is a man of knowledge, a man stuffed full of facts, as you are a man of learning and imagination. . . . His story which has oozed out to me quite unostentatiously, but which I may certainly tell for he is clearly proud of it as he has cause, is this. Six and twenty years ago he left his Scotch home a boy of fifteen with one acquaintance in London and not a friend. In the first three years he had a little from home—very little which he has repaid with interest—and there he stands now as Mr. Ruskin knows at the head of one the first houses in his line, spending more money in doing good and showing kindness than in any other way. . . . His only danger lay in his being beset by parasites. I know the danger of that in Mr. Justice Talfourd's case. It has done no good to Dickens, though William Harness who dined the other evening at Miss Coutts's to hear him read his new Christmas story says it is in better taste than the others—and a much greater than either, Wordsworth, would have been a far higher poet if like Scott he had

avoided talking of his own work and learnt that the highest faculty given to men is that of admiration.

How pretty is your wish about giving me a day! Ah, keep them all! Who uses them so well? I once heard a similar piece of affection (it is too true and deep a feeling to be called flattery) exprest to one whom you must know by his sister-in-law a dear friend of my own—"Ah" she said, "if all who love you could only give you a day of their lives!" And really it seems as if it might have come true—for the object of the wish was good old Dr. Routh of Magdalen [1] now I believe in his hundredth year and for all I know of as likely to live as twenty years ago.

December 19, 1854.

The packet has arrived. What pictures for truth and purity! and what words for eloquence and conviction! [2]

Did I tell you that I have been very ill, but am now growing gradually better?

I, so bad a judge, am yet sure of those Giotto plates, because all last night as I lay, after looking at them, sleepless but with my eyes closed—I saw them just as I have often seen a bank of purple

[1] He died December 22, 1854. He was born in 1755.
[2] "Lectures on Architecture and Painting," 1854.

violets, or a bed of lilies of the valley amongst the dead leaves of the Silchester coppices—and this never happens, can never happen except with fine things.

December 24, 1854.

This letter of mine though written on Sunday cannot go till to-morrow. This is always the case on Sunday, because our postman just brings the letters to our little office at Swallowfield, three quarters of a mile off, and then returns immediately with the bag he finds ready for him giving no time for reply. I tell you this in the way of explanation not of complaint—for if there be one of the divine commandments holier and more blessed than another, it is that of the day of rest which brings the weekly pause of labour to man and beast, though I think the Gospel itself clearly indicates when it talks of our Saviour and His disciples walking through the fields, that with the morning prayer should be combined that other form of worship for the town-penned artisan, the afternoon ramble through the ripening corn. Some day or other Louis Napoleon, so anxious for the health mental and bodily of the poorer classes, will bring about this union. Well! this is why my earnest wishes for every blessing to you all will arrive a day after the proper day. Ah! but my prayers have not lagged, unworthy though I be, my prayers for blessings upon your heads. And I have lived long enough to see how

very very often even in this world they who pass their lives in good deeds, in making others happy, and throwing sunshine into shady places, do in their own person reap the good seed which they have sown. So be it with you, beloved friends! The tenderest wish that poetry or that affection could dictate would hardly exceed the desire that you might be dealt with as you have dealt with me and mine. Happy be you together during this Christmas, and during many and many a Christmas to come! as happy as it is your delight to make others.

. . . . .

Be very sure that this Christmas will be much the happier for all that I owe to yourself and your dear parents—for the glowing warmth of heart which you have given me. But we must only reckon upon the present hour. The feeble, fluttering pulse which can often hardly be found is kept beating by brandy . . . and from 7 to 10 times in the 24 hours I take enormous doses of that incomparable medicine, not more watered than it would be for ordinary sale—take it with the same impunity that I might take so much tea. It is a good sign that a first-rate surgeon deals so frankly with a patient. Twenty years ago a far coarser spirit, disguised by useless drugs would have been sent from the shop instead of the cellar. Truth begins to prevail—and will not be repulsed.

Miss Mitford to Charles Boner.

Christmas Day, 1854.

A merry Christmas and a happy new year to you and as many years full of peace and comfort as can well be wished for in this world, to you, and to the sister with whom I always take for granted your lot will be cast. A good and dear sister is, perhaps, the safest and best companion after the years of youth and passion have gone by, and her experience in the same foreign land will give to her all the habits, English and German, which you would perhaps miss with one whose ways were exclusively those of either country. You hardly know yourself how German you are, but an English wife would make you feel it perhaps painfully, by feeling it very strongly herself. I dare say that in Germany you seem more English than you do here; and then the German wife would be too German. So you see I have settled for you a bachelor household; brother and sister. The happiest and most refined *ménage* of London (that of William and Mary Harness) is such. He has one of the new churches at Knightsbridge.[1] They have a pretty house in Hyde Park Terrace, nearly opposite the old Great Exhibition. He has lived more than forty years with all that was best and highest in art and literature in London, and still

[1] All Saints.

sees all that there is left of literature in the closest intimacy: indeed, in all London there is nothing like his dinners for pleasantness and ease. A female cousin lives with them. She is well off and contributes to the housekeeping, but she would have been still more certain of sharing their home had she been poor. One widowed brother (Captain Harness, R.N.) lives near them: another brother, Major Harness, R.A., is sent about to set things in order, whatever Government happens to be in power. Their children are doing well. They keep three maids and hire waiters, and William Harness is perfectly the social equal of Mr. Hope with his eighty thousand pounds a year, and Lord Lansdown with his prestige of rank, fortune, age and character. This is much to the honour of London, for William Harness, incurably indolent, has never by any great work vindicated his own high talents, but is accepted as Bennet Langton, and one or two more of that day, were, purely on the ground of delightful conversation and high personal character. This is a good precedent for men of moderate means, especially to those who know how utterly untractable the man in question is; a Harnessite on all points of politics and theology. It would have been as easy to convert David Deans from, or to, any opinion, great or small. His father having given my mother away, and our being brought up together, has always been among the happiest accidents of my life.

I have to thank you, my dear friend, for a very beautiful book, to which I earnestly wish all the success it deserves. At present no book *sells*. The only one that is spoken of at all is Lord Carlisle's flimsy work,[1] which it owes partly to its subject, and partly to its being the work of a lord who disdains no sort of cant that may bring him popularity—cant of liberality, cant of benevolence, cant of patriotism, cant of religion. However, your book having no temporary interest, can afford to wait. What is become of your book on old German manners? *That* very rapidly written (I don't mean in a short time, but vividly, without pausing upon this or that—just as contradistinguished from slow), so as to make a short small book out of a quantity of material, would make a name and be as good as a life annuity. Think of this, and get such a book ready against people read again. What is sad, is that in America, where there is no war, the stagnation in the trade is even worse than here.

Dear Mr. Fields, who has just married a beautiful young wife (they are said to be the handsomest couple in New England), has not even ventured to take a house (think of that!), and seems to anticipate that he shall be unable to visit Europe this year. He says that the prospect ahead is so gloomy that he dares not look at it, and to any one who knows his exceedingly sanguine nature

[1] "Diary in Turkish and Greek Waters," by the seventh Earl of Carlisle.

and English tastes and magnificent habits, this picture of such a bridegroom taking rooms in a boarding-house, and anticipating a universal crash in the American book-world, is astounding.

The most striking book that I have seen for a long while is a dissenting novel, "Philip Lancaster," [1] dedicated to myself. The writer is a young girl, and the book is full of every fault of which idleness and carelessness can be guilty. The mere removal of textual repetition would make it two volumes instead of three, but then it is full of character and of talent, tells much on all subjects, knocks down humbug to the right and left. Beyond all doubt, if she chooses to give herself a common chance, M. N. may be a great novelist, but I doubt if she will. She belongs to a family of rich paper-makers, is a most charming person, accustomed to have her own way. If ever you can, read "Philip Lancaster"—you will see how racy and original she is. I have been reading Madame Sand's "Mémoires" in the feuilletons of the "Presse." What a pedigree it is! and what charming bird-stories there are, and how delightful a correspondence between her grandmother and her father. Only one feels so certain that the correspondence has been touched up, if not entirely manufactured, and that the whole autobiography is, and will be, a *plaidoyer* for the exceptional woman, and not a narrative of events as they

[1] By Miss Maria Norris.

happened. Dear, dear John Ruskin sent me some Swiss books, "René le Fermier," and two or three more by the same writer, with excellent morals, and very vile Swiss-French. Just the reverse of Madame Sand. You do not care for style as I do, which is lucky for you as a reader, but then that same dear friend has sent me his own Giotto plates, and a book on that school even more eloquent than anything he ever did before, a perfect storm of eloquence that takes one by assault.

Well, dear friend, you will ask how I am. I grow weaker and weaker—fall down two steps; climb up one!—never regain the point I have lost. Do you know those pretty make-believe old books, "Mary Powell," "Milton's Courtship," and many others? The author, whom I know only by correspondence, I love and respect exceedingly. Her letters are admirable. Oh! I have been reading that frightful spirit book of Judge Edwards—"Spiritualism": which has driven so many people mad in America, and is doing the same here. God bless you.

Miss Mitford to John Ruskin.

December 26, 1854.

You ask me if I have a fancy for a book—and reading last night Mrs. Browning's last letter I

find her speaking of "Les Maîtres Sonneurs"[1] as one of George Sand's most exquisite pastorals —you know how exquisite her pastorals are—so I ask you frankly for that little tale. If I could get it here at all it would be in English, and George Sand's Pastorals in English are flowers in a Hortus Siccus instead of flowers in a meadow.

Last night, too, Christmas night, I read over for the second time your Giotto book! What a book! You thinking all the time only of the painter, never for a moment of the pen which was painting him! —and there the frequent mention of Lord Lyndsay reminded me of the pleasure I once felt at finding my name in a book of his. You know such a mention gives pleasure in proportion to one's own estimate of the writer—and therefore it was that I remember to this hour the smile that sprang from the heart to the lips on seeing his kind words. He is a friend of yours of course. Will you tell him some day how much pleasure he gave me then—and that I have ever since followed his literary course, which is I suppose his real life, with as deep an interest as if we were known to each other in the ordinary way. His very name comes to me like the name of a friend. He is very different from his books if the knowledge that

[1] Published 1853. In a letter to Mrs. Jameson, October 17, 1854, Mrs. Browning writes: "Tell me if you have read George Sand's 'Maîtres Sonneurs,' and if it isn't exquisite."

his thought—I mean the thought of him—comes into my room as brightly as these morning sunbeams, do not carry back to his own heart some of the gratification which his kindness has given to mine.

Poor Dr. Routh! He was always kind to me. Strange that we should have been talking of him so lately.[1] Four years ago—only that I seemed as it were impelled towards Swallowfield, I had nearly fixed on a house in his living of Tilehurst —a church-like house where a long, low building with a very steep roof was terminated by a tall square battlemented tower.

Once again, beloved friends, I send you the old-fashioned hearty wishes belonging to this season. Such wishes are prayers. May God bless you, the kind and the dear!

Miss Mitford died a fortnight later, January 10, 1855. Her last published letter, dated January 8th, is addressed to the Rev. Hugh Pearson, and concludes: "To-day I am better; but if you wish for another cheerful evening with your old friend, there is no time to be lost."

[1] See note, p. 306.

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